





# JOSEPH LACASSE

1894–1975

A UNIVERSE IN THE UNIVERSE

A PIONEER OF ABSTRACTION

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Fig. 1: Joseph Lacasse, *Self-Portrait*, 1919, chalks on paper, 40 x 37 cm.

# JOSEPH LACASSE: A UNIVERSE IN THE UNIVERSE

## A PIONEER OF ABSTRACTION

Joseph Lacasse was born in 1894 into a poor working class family in the quarry town of Tournai, Belgium. The financial exploitation of the working classes to feed the new industrial fortunes made their lives a constant struggle. Fulfilling the basic life condition of providing enough food was a continuous preoccupation and as a result children were put to labour as young as possible. Cramped in small dwellings with poor hygiene, the workers and their families withstood almost inhuman hardships.

Lacasse's experience as a child labourer in the local limestone quarries (1905-1910) shaped his future as a staunch socialist and a defender of the proletarian cause. As a young adult, Lacasse witnessed the premature physical demise of his parents, brought on by years of hard manual labour. At the same time, Lacasse was grateful for their sacrifices that allowed him to attend evening classes at art school as of 1906. Notwithstanding their illiteracy, Lacasse's parents believed in their own different ways in their son's artistic calling. In return, Lacasse treated his parents with the utmost respect.

The unruly child became an innate undisciplined man of strong socialist conviction. A self-declared anarchist and a catholic convert, Lacasse's personality reveals many contradictions. Self-centred on his quest for total independence, Lacasse's behaviour also showed evidence of genuine altruism. In addition, Lacasse was able to pair his fight for the proletarian cause with a deep mystical spiritual belief.

Lacasse's colourful, larger than life personality along with his high intelligence, inquisitive nature and adventurous spirit pushed him along a path of continuous research, which is reflected in his many pictorial expressions.

*'A classic? An Impressionist? A Fauvist? A Cubist?'*. With these apt words, Georges Delizée opened his 1927 publication *'Joseph Lacasse: Un Peintre du Pays Blanc'*.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, until the publication of his first monograph in 1927 and up until 1931, Lacasse had not been faithful to one style, and it is safe to say that between 1909 and 1931 Lacasse worked simultaneously in an intuitive abstract way for his impressions of the *Cailloux*, as well as in the Cubist style and in a Social Realist manner to portray monumental figures in fauve colours to evoke the hardships of the working classes and the moods of his religious scenes. Still, whichever the style of choice, Lacasse was expressing his brutally raw emotion to bring alive the object through light.

Throughout his entire career, as a master of Figuration and Abstraction, light remained the central axis around which his work turned and developed. In his Journals, Lacasse talks extensively about light, which he uses to let the subject emerge from its internal geometry.<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 2: Design for a carpet, executed during the evening classes under Professor Allard, Tournai, 1909, facs. Fonds Naessens, Archives de l'Art Contemporain, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de la Belgique, Brussels.



Fig. 3: Design for a carpet, executed during the evening classes under Professor Allard, Tournai, 1909, facs. Fonds Naessens, Archives de l'Art Contemporain, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de la Belgique, Brussels.

At first unwittingly, but after 1931 very consciously, Lacasse focussed on his ambition to create pure painting by applying the virtues of purity in order to be able to communicate with God. Only then could he attain a state of happiness. Consequently, Lacasse would never stop to experiment in order to attain that status, thus creating his universe in the Universe.

### 1909-1925: Tournai: 'Cailloux', Child Art, Social Realism, Cubism and Mystico-Realism

Light and colour were central to Lacasse's art since the beginning of his career. Georges Delizée described how Lacasse used saturated colours, applied in scales of tonality and how he let himself be transported by them, in a Fauve manner of expression.<sup>3</sup>

During his years as a child labourer, 1905-1910, Lacasse would take home small off-cuts from the quarry slabs and portray them in chalks on black paper - the only paper he could afford, being readily available at the quarries. He drew impressions of the stone as it appeared whilst the light of the sun was refracted into a prism by an embedded mineral or by the rain or water running over it during the cutting process. Lacasse drew the stones close up, using his chalks to recreate the light glowing from within. The rather coarse technique gives away a child-like honesty. As the colours bounce off the naked matte black background, these drawings possess a rare solemnity.

With these so-called *Cailloux* dating 1909-1914 (Cat. nos. 1 and 2), Lacasse unwittingly inscribed himself into the history of Abstraction, a fact recognized by Michel Seuphor.<sup>4</sup> In addition Seuphor ranked Lacasse before his Belgian compatriot Victor Servranckx in the list of precursors of Abstraction.<sup>5</sup>

Lacasse's intuitive impressions of the stone, an innate abstract natural object, could not be more removed from Wassily Kandinsky's intellectual reasoning to arrive at Abstraction. Whilst Kandinsky published his 'Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst' in 1912, the barely literate sixteen-year old Lacasse attended classes at the local Tournai Académie des Beaux-Arts. Here his designs for carpets, executed during his 1909-1911 evening classes under Professor Allard, show Lacasse's creative talent for abstract decoration (*Figs. 2 and 3*).<sup>6</sup>

Around 1913-1915, Lacasse made a series of child-like works. In search of synthesis and dissection of interior values, Lacasse applied the same refraction of the light prism on scenes of mothers hugging their children in the cold streets, in

search of food and warmth. Rudimentary painted figures with ball-shaped heads merge with the background in an attempt to eliminate the traditional line in favour of refraction. Thus Lacasse arrived at proto-Cubism (Fig. 4).<sup>7</sup>

In the same light, Delizée refers to Lacasse's synthetic Cubist self-portrait (Fig. 5).<sup>8</sup> His *Cailloux* and child-like proto-Cubist works were ridiculed by his fellow students at art school in Tournai. For lack of knowledge of the avant-garde and perceived through their provincial eyes, his professors described these synthetic works as 'mosaic art'.<sup>9</sup> At the time, Lacasse's illiteracy<sup>10</sup> made him feel like an underdog amidst the bourgeois academic tradition of a provincial art school. In search for recognition, Lacasse conformed to the reigning movement of Social Realist Figuration.

During the Great War, provoked by the atrocities, injustice and horrors of the German prison camps, Lacasse turned to full Expressionist Figuration. At the time a socialist atheist, Lacasse felt compelled to use the image of Christ for the sole purpose of showing suffering and pain. Lacasse's Christ figures are working class men, depicted tired and worn, helpless but resigned.

Having himself escaped from a German prisoner of war camp, Lacasse lingered in the civil hospital in Tournai until the end of the War. Here, his strong feeling for injustice brought him to depict the conditions of the poverty he knew so well, in close up scenes of naturalistic expressionist figures, larger than life, their eyes empty, resigned to their fate of social oppression as exemplified in his 1914 *Le Repas des Débardeurs*.<sup>11</sup>

*Méditation* (before 1927) shows a working-class man as a saint, bending his head in a humbling gesture slightly forward as in prayer, his hands large as spades praying for salvation from his fate.<sup>12</sup> *Le Retour du Carrier* (1925) shows a man exhausted and vacant, but still holding onto a glimmer of pride.<sup>13</sup>

*Portrait de mon père* (1920) depicts Lacasse's father, staring at the floor, tired and spent after a hard day's work. *Douleur* (1925-26), a personification of pain and desperation, acts as a solitary cry for help in front of a brightly illuminated silent cross, a metaphor of Lacasse's state before his conversion to Catholicism (Fig. 6).

These paintings display a use of a Caravagesque chiaroscuro handling of the light for dramatic purpose. The figures, painted close-up and against backgrounds void of superfluous objects, communicate a sense of monumentality. They not only bear testimony to Lacasse's attachment to the proletarian cause but also to his special communication of light.



Fig. 4: *Le Saint-Foyer*, 1914-15, oil on canvas, Private Collection, Belgium.



Fig. 5: *Portrait de Lacasse par lui-même*, 1913, pencil on paper, 65 x 50 cm.



Fig. 6: *Douleur*, 1925-26, oil on canvas, 130 x 90 cm, Private Collection, Croix, France.



Fig. 7: *Italie (Maternité)*, 1922, oil on panel, 100 x 50 cm, Private Collection, Belgium.

Alongside these Social Realist paintings Lacasse also painted a series of Mystico-Realist and Cubist works. In his 1927 monograph, Georges Delizée described his familiarity with Lacasse's Cubist and Mystico-Realist works, which he brought back from Paris aged twenty-five, thus providing 1919 as a definite terminus ante quem.<sup>14</sup>

Delizée also states that Lacasse's Social Realist and Cubist styles are not alien to one another and that a rich exchange exists between both styles, facilitated by his Mystico-Realist style.<sup>15</sup> Delizée comments extensively about Lacasse's Cubist works, which he presents as the natural result of Lacasse's innate gift for synthesis and his preoccupation with masses and volumes, first stimulated by the great spectacle of the quarries.<sup>16</sup>

Following two years of studies at the Brussels Académie des Beaux-Arts (1921-22), Lacasse travelled in France and Italy during 1922-1924. Here his subject matter revolved around maternity and religious scenes, executed in purely fauve colours (Fig. 7).



Fig. 8: *Italie*, 1924, oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, Private Collection, Belgium.

In Italy Lacasse experimented with lyrical and geometrical abstraction in order to evoke pure light. These works have definite overtones of Orphism and it is more than plausible that Lacasse had encountered the work of Robert Delaunay in 1919 aged twenty-five, on his first trip to Paris (Figs. 7 and 8).

### 1925-1931: Paris: Maurice Denis and Robert Delaunay

By 1925 Lacasse decided to settle in Paris, armed with a letter of recommendation to Maurice Denis. For months Lacasse worked under the guidance of Denis who greatly admired Lacasse's talent.<sup>17</sup>

At first Lacasse found lodgings at 15 rue Mazarine, but after his 1927 wedding to Stéphanie Lupsin<sup>18</sup>, the couple took a studio to work and live at 11 Impasse Ronsin in Montparnasse in 1928.<sup>19</sup>

The first to settle in these desolate rambling studios to transform them into a creative haven was Constantin Brancusi (1916), with whom Lacasse became life-long friends (Figs. 9 and 10). Regular visitors to the Impasse Ronsin included Erik Satie (as of 1919), Francis Picabia (as of 1927), Sonia Delaunay (as of 1928), Marcel Duchamp (as of 1928), Jean Arp (as of 1928), Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson (1932) and Peggy Guggenheim (1940). During the 1950s, Max Ernst, Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint-Phalle worked there.



Fig. 9: *Lacasse assisting his friend and neighbour Constantin Brancusi.* Still from the broadcast 'Paris, Années folles de Montmartre à Montparnasse', Channel France 3, 2 Dec. 2013.

It was also around 1925 in Paris that Lacasse converted to Catholicism under the influence of a Jewish friend, who introduced him to the mystical 'Béatitudes' of the Dominican theologian Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

It proved to be a revelation to the young painter. Eager to quell his latent unhappiness and unease at the exploitation of the working classes, Lacasse welcomed these mystic values, which explained happiness in terms of completion, perfection and wellbeing. Lacasse was more than ready to adopt a spiritual calling, which requires a range of intellectual and moral virtues to achieve real happiness. He longed for the final happiness consisting of 'beatitude' or the supernatural union with God. According to the 13th Century mystic, this ultimate status is unreachable through our human nature, and the individual needs God to transform it, so that we might be suited to participate in divine beatitude. Therefore one must strive for ultimate purity.

These mystical theories, which bonded the ancient Greek philosophy of Aristotle and Christian theology appealed to Lacasse for they seemed in tune with his lifelong deep-rooted but unconscious search for justice, purity and light. The transformed human state to participate in the divine beatitude was described by Lacasse to the critic Robert Garric as a real rejuvenation: *'What I found since I started believing is a state of youth and a youthful spirit. I have become young again. My compositions, (...) are more disciplined, but I have found without effort more real and infantile expressions'*.<sup>20</sup>

Aquinas' teachings verbalised what Lacasse had felt intuitively for so long and they gave his different styles a reason for being.

When Lacasse settled in Paris in 1925, he had reached artistic maturity and encompassed a considerable and varied stylistic experience. Lacasse continued with the synthesis of form and *'what the genius of Cézanne had discovered, Lacasse executed with bravura'*.<sup>21</sup>

During 1927-1928 Lacasse met Robert Delaunay, whose influence on his colour-palette would be profound. Lacasse's admiration for the master of Orphism and his wife Sonia was expressed in paintings such as *Magic Robert I* (Fig. 11) and in *Magique Sonia* (Cat. no. 36).

During the 1950s Lacasse also wrote to Sonia Delaunay that *'I cannot find the words justifying my joy knowing that I am appreciated by the wife of the great painter whom I loved, and who understood and encouraged me'*.<sup>22</sup> Delaunay's works and theories revived Lacasse's teenage intuitive discovery of the refraction of light, as expressed in his *Cailloux* and in his proto-Cubist child-like paintings.



Fig. 10: *Portrait of Constantin Brancusi*, 1936, charcoal on paper, 104 x 75 cm, Private Collection, Belgium.

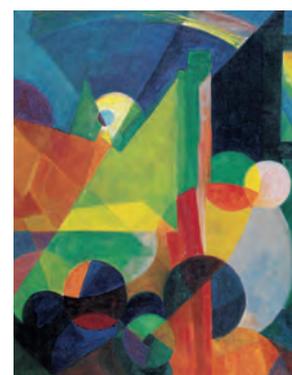


Fig. 11: *Magic Robert I*, 1931, oil on canvas, 116 x 90 cm, Collection Belfius Bank, Brussels, Belgium.



Fig. 12: *Le Deuxième Jour de la Création*, 1928, oil on canvas, 263 x 151 cm, Collection Belfius, Brussels, Belgium.



Fig. 13: *Le Troisième Jour de la Création*, 1927, oil on canvas, 271 x 150 cm, Collection Belfius, Brussels, Belgium.

Delaunay's stylistic influence is clearly felt in the 2nd, 3rd, 6th and 7th day of the series *Sept Jours de la Création*, four large-scale paintings executed in 1927-28 (Figs. 12-15).<sup>23</sup> Lacasse revisited these paintings in 1933 in a suite of seven lithographs. (Cat. no. 4).

Having worked for Maurice Denis, by then known as the rejuvenator of religious art, Lacasse frequented not only Robert Delaunay but also remained acquainted with the circle of the so-called 'Art Sacré'. Thus Lacasse continued to simultaneously paint religious scenes as well as abstracts in the Rayonist and Ophist styles. Many documents dating 1928-1931 state that Lacasse was not a man of one single school. He wanted to frequent different circles in order to research pure painting and reach enlightenment. That he was experimenting with the building up of masses, equilibrating volumes and the repartition of light and shadow was described as early as 1930.<sup>24</sup>

It was also in 1929 that Lacasse first met the anarchist writer Henry Poulaille, who would become a dear friend and life-long defender of Lacasse's work. Both men were staunch socialists and Poulaille was the first to really understand Lacasse's profound quest for purity, and the ups and downs this process entailed.

In 1931, Lacasse's repute as a gifted religious figurative painter secured him the commission to paint the frescoes of the new chapel of the Dominican abbey at Juvisy, South of Paris.

Ever the defender of the proletarian cause and much in the manner of Caravaggio, Lacasse depicted Christ and Saints as working class people, in powerful emotional settings. Such images proved shocking to the Church establishment and the frescoes were subsequently ordered to be destroyed. A court case ensued, but was lost by Lacasse, leaving him penniless, devastated and disillusioned.<sup>25</sup>

The Juvisy episode cannot be underestimated as a turning point in Lacasse's career. It is without doubt that the mystic theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas helped him ultimately overcome the Juvisy disaster and explore pure painting through the sole medium of Abstraction.

Whilst practicing Abstraction, Lacasse found the words 'abstraction' or 'abstract' limiting. In his journal Lacasse describes his metaphysical journey in creating an abstract: *'I do not know why I find the word 'abstract' inapt, for I regard the finished (abstract) painting as something that comes to live, a living object in itself and is therefore the opposite of abstract.'* He continues to say that *'when the (abstract) painting is born, the painting speaks and acts, the painting has its own life, mysterious and sacred.'*<sup>26</sup>

## 1931-1939: l'Equipe

In 1934 Lacasse and his friend, the writer Henry Poulaille founded 'l'Equipe', a platform for the independent artist. Here painters, writers, philosophers and musicians met to exhibit art, assist theatrical happenings and discuss aesthetics, literature and science. They united under the common denominator of solidarity and the belief in the importance to defend the proletarian cause. For three years l'Equipe gathered at Lacasse's studio at 11 Impasse Ronsin. It was a veritable hub of artistic creation, a stage for real exchange between young and established artists. The ideas of Picasso, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Kandinsky, Klee and other precursors were experimented with by all taking part.

In 1937 proper exhibition premises were rented on 79-81 Boulevard Montparnasse. Lacasse and his wife took care of the gallery, which was inaugurated with a show of work by Delaunay, Gleizes, Lipchitz, Kisling, Lurçat, Löwenstein, Picabia, Van Tongerloo and Lacasse.<sup>27</sup> The programme of l'Equipe was intense, with almost thirty exhibitions and happenings in its two-year existence as a public gallery. In the press, l'Equipe was aptly described as a gallery where young artists could meet, exchange, and collectively look for new answers in painting.<sup>28</sup> One exhibition illustrating the purpose of l'Equipe as a platform for exchange in all solidarity was the 1939 one-man show of Italian painter Luigi Veronesi's Suprematist works.<sup>29</sup>

During the early years of l'Equipe and its experiments, Lacasse had started a series of small works, which were purely Tachist, twenty years before the movement of Tachism became part of art history (Cat. nos. 9-12). Again, Lacasse's personal research into the refraction of light paired with his mysticism led him to being a pioneer.

In 1937, at the Gallery l'Equipe, Lacasse had a solo-exhibition showing his Tachist and abstract experiments alongside figurative works. It was on this occasion that Lacasse's non-figurative works were first described in the press.<sup>30</sup>

The Tachist experiments were a logical development for Lacasse who had always regarded the 'tâche' or stain as the building block of all painting. As early as 1930 Lacasse was quoted saying: *'The real, meaning oneself, is to forget the part that one learned; it is to advance in a frank way towards a magic which one can express but which cannot be learned. To paint for me is to throw stains ('tâches'); then to start from these stains to decorate them to arrive at a composition to animate the subject. The stains are the secret of the painter. It is with the stains that he makes one laugh or cry.'*<sup>31</sup>



Fig. 14: *Le Sixième Jour de la Création*, 1930, oil on canvas, 256 x 150 cm, Collection Belfius, Brussels, Belgium.

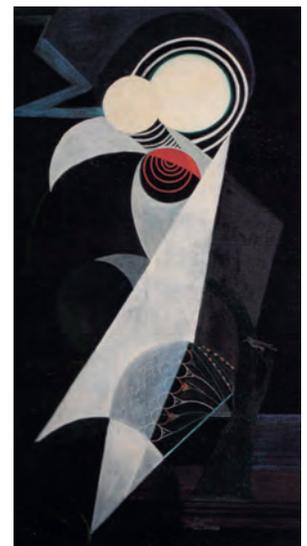


Fig. 15: *Le Septième Jour de la Création*, 1929, oil on canvas 249 x 150 cm, Collection Belfius, Brussels, Belgium.



Fig. 16: Joseph Lacasse, drawing published in 'L'Equipe des Arts et des Lettres', no. 1, 15 May 1939.



Fig. 17: Carnet de l'Equipe, gouaches no. 81 and no. 82, 1935, 19 x 13 cm paper size, Lacasse Family Collection.

During these years, Lacasse not only experimented with Abstraction but also returned to what he called 'childish painting', typified by round heads and rudimentary shapes. In the first edition of the magazine 'l'Equipe des Arts et des Lettres', Poulaille reproduced one of Lacasse's child-like works which proves to be a piece of pure Art Brut (Fig. 16).<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the 1930's, and in particular during the years 1937-39 whilst manning the l'Equipe Gallery, Lacasse furthered his research into light and volume. Drawn in bound books, supplied by his friend Henry Poulaille, these sketches bear testimony to the maturity of his abstract compositions (Figs. 17-22).

In 1938 l'Equipe organised a second one-man show of paintings by Lacasse, where he showed some of his religious scenes in semi-figurative style, but also paintings in which he transcends figuration in favour of pure light and colour.<sup>33</sup>

Based on historical published documents and sources, it can at present be concluded without doubt that during 1909-1931 Lacasse was an open-minded independent painter, in touch with his inner search for light and volume and consequently practiced a range of styles, including intuitive Abstraction, Social Realist Figuration, Fauvism, Cubism, Mystico-Realism and child-like Art Brut painting. The historical evidence also demonstrates that as of 1931-1932, following the disappointment of losing the Juvisy court case, Lacasse fully embraced lyrical Abstraction<sup>34</sup> and reached maturity in Abstraction during the mid 1930s.

Yet, it remains astounding that art history has not been able to unanimously embrace Lacasse's entire varied creative output, and therefore withheld Lacasse the nomination of a pioneer of Abstraction. Over the years, during his lifetime and after his passing, scores of eminent critics and art historians, including Maurits Bilcke, Michel Seuphor, Raymond Cogniat, Michel Ragon, Henry Poulaille, Roger Bordier, Willy Van den Bussche and Marc Renwart have confirmed Lacasse's role as a pioneer of Abstraction and as a source of inspiration to Serge Poliakoff.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, somehow art history has failed to bestow the same accolades to Lacasse as the ones granted to Nicolas de Staël and Serge Poliakoff, let alone be recognised as their precursor.<sup>36</sup>



Fig. 18: Carnet de l'Equipe, gouache no. 34, 1933, 19 x 13 cm paper size, Lacasse Family Collection.



Fig. 19: Carnet de l'Equipe, gouaches no. 65 and no. 66, 1935, 19 x 13 cm paper size, Lacasse Family Collection.

### Lacasse and Poliakov

Considering the striking likeness between the work of Joseph Lacasse and Serge Poliakov it is surprising to learn that all Poliakov literature omits Joseph Lacasse altogether and only notes Wassily Kandinsky, Robert Delaunay and Otto Freundlich as Poliakov's influences. At the same time, the Poliakov literature states that not much is known about a relationship between Poliakov and Otto Freundlich.<sup>37</sup> It does however recognize that Poliakov visited l'Equipe, but surprisingly excludes the name of its artistic driving force and only mentions Henry Poulaille as the head of l'Equipe.<sup>38</sup>

This circumvention of the subject of Lacasse in all Poliakov literature seems aberrant in the face of history which reveals that the two men knew each other quite well by 1938, a time when Lacasse had reached abstract maturity and Poliakov showed his first works which were '*not exactly abstract but already liberated*'.<sup>39</sup>

Contemporary to both Lacasse and Poliakov, the critic and writer Michel Ragon who knew the work of both painters recounts more accurately that '*Poliakov frequented a group of painters and writers of Montparnasse gathered by Joseph Lacasse and Henry Poulaille under the name of l'Equipe.*'<sup>40</sup> In addition, Poliakov met Lacasse frequently at the Thursday evening gatherings at the studio of Robert Delaunay during November 1938 – July 1939, as confirmed by Robert Delaunay himself.<sup>41</sup> However, when the Poliakov literature cites Poliakov's presence at Delaunay's Thursday evening lessons, it repeats all names mentioned by Robert Delaunay apart from the name of Joseph Lacasse.<sup>42</sup> Finally Henry Poulaille confirmed that Poliakov not only frequented l'Equipe but based his research into Abstraction on the painting of Lacasse.<sup>43</sup> Significantly, Marcel Van Jole confirmed that during his long talks with Poliakov during 1953, the Russian-born painter had no problem admitting that he frequently visited Lacasse's studio, that he was very familiar with Lacasse's work and that he owed a great deal to Lacasse.<sup>44</sup>

During that crucial year of 1938, Lacasse had known Robert Delaunay personally for ten years, had experimented with Orphism during the 1920s and with Tachism during the mid-1930s. Lacasse showed full maturity in his Abstract researches, demonstrated in his famous 'Carnets de l'Equipe' dating 1934-1940 (Figs. 17-22). The maturity of these drawings and gouaches show



Fig. 20: Carnet de l'Equipe no.7, 1933 – 1935 - 1940, Lacasse Family Collection.

Lacasse's disciplined dedication to a life long search for pure painting through light and the sublimation of subject matter.

Poliakoff on the other hand had fled Russia in 1918, and travelled around Europe visiting cities such Vienna, Berlin, and Paris, making a living as a guitarist in Russian cabarets. His proper interest in painting was aroused during a trip to London in 1935-1937. Shortly after settling in Paris in 1937 he met Robert Delaunay and Joseph Lacasse. Poliakov exhibited his first semi-abstract work in 1938 at the Galerie le Niveau<sup>45</sup> and stated to Michel Ragon that he had needed ten years to experiment to finally reach abstract maturity in 1949,<sup>46</sup> the moment he left behind his tracing lines, and became stylistically very close to the painting of Joseph Lacasse.

Michel Seuphor noted on the subject of Poliakov that whilst Poliakov was still a figurative painter he often visited Lacasse: *'Poliakov rendait souvent visite à Lacasse; il se souviendra quinze ans après d'oeuvres que celui-ci avait exécutées sous ses yeux. Que Poliakov ait dû se souvenir des thèmes des pierres brisées développés par Lacasse, cela nous paraît en effet tout à fait certain.'*<sup>47</sup> In 1952 Henry Poulaille wrote to Sonia Delaunay that it was unacceptable that Lacasse was being branded by the art trade as a follower of Poliakov: *'What a farce: and this by people who went to Lacasse and not Lacasse who went to them. I protest. It is false and one has to put things right. We are many to have seen the non-figurative oeuvre of Lacasse since almost twenty years.'*<sup>48</sup>

These combined facts highlight art history's unfair treatment of Lacasse and his contribution. Recognised by many of his contemporaries as a pioneer, Lacasse was relegated to the status of a follower of Poliakov, in a gradual process, which started during the early 1950s, the moment when Poliakov's career was launched by the trade and both painters were shown at the Galerie Denise René and the Galerie Dina Vierny.<sup>49</sup>

In search for answers to this unjust demise, one encounters several reasons and explanations.

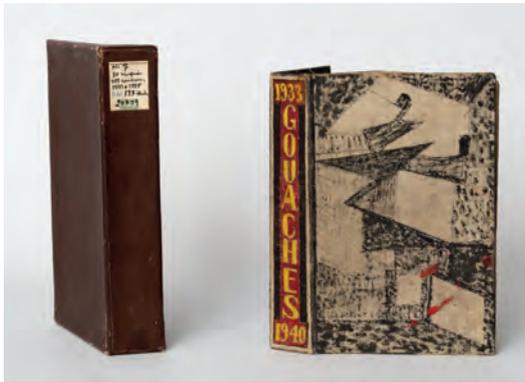


Fig. 21: Carnet de l'Equipe no.7, 1933 – 1940, Lacasse Family Collection.



Fig. 22: Carnet de l'Equipe, no. 6, 1931 – 1935, Lacasse Family Collection.

**One valid explanation of Lacasse's current omission in art history as one of the pioneers of Abstraction and a decisive influence on Poliakoff lies in the correspondence of Sonia Delaunay.**

In a letter to Henry Poulaille, Sonia Delaunay states that she loves the abstract works of Lacasse, and that she knows herself that he was the precursor of Poliakoff. Delaunay also verbalizes her worry that Lacasse's figurative paintings damage his reputation as an Abstractionist.<sup>50</sup>

Delaunay, being an independent woman artist, knew all too well the pitfalls of the art market and the orthodoxy of art history which approaches the career of an artist as a logical and gradual development from one style to another, from their youth work and influences to their own style in their mature work. Delaunay was aware of the fact that Lacasse did not fit that mould. Consequently, for fear of misinterpretation of Lacasse's work, she warned Henry Poulaille with the words: 'one has to tread carefully'.<sup>51</sup> During January 1955, Sonia Delaunay also warned Lacasse with the words: 'You should not be plucked as a chicken'<sup>52</sup>, in anticipation to the art market's reaction to the article published by Roger Bordier, hailing Lacasse as a precursor. In April 1956, Sonia Delaunay wrote to Lacasse that she 'is disgusted with the art market she sees around her' and that she asks herself 'for whom and for what?'. She continues to say that 'they made us pay dearly to remain free'. In the same letter she continues to say that 'we are quite alone these days – when money is the only valid motif'.<sup>53</sup>

In an undated letter to Lacasse, Delaunay confesses again her loathing for the market with the words: 'There is a lot to say about Picasso and us. I was at the Venice Biennale (...) What a basket of crabs! It is far from high Art and Purity!'<sup>54</sup>

**Secondly, it is clear that Lacasse's own absence from France during the formative years of Poliakoff 1939-1946, did not do him any favours.**

Upon his return to Paris in 1946 Lacasse was astounded and disappointed to find that Poliakoff was hailed as a master of Abstraction whilst he had been pushed to the background. After all, before his departure to England in 1940, it had been known that artists frequenting l'Equipe did copy Lacasse. When in 1939 Henry Poulaille pointed out to Lacasse that one of his pupils exhibited a copy of one his paintings, Lacasse answered point blank that he didn't care.<sup>55</sup> As a strong believer in solidarity, justice and honour, Lacasse had not taken into account the



Fig. 23: Cahier de l'Ecole Polytechnique, Paris, 1939, London and Stoke-on-Trent, 1940-1943, 18.5 x 12 cm, Lacasse Family Collection.

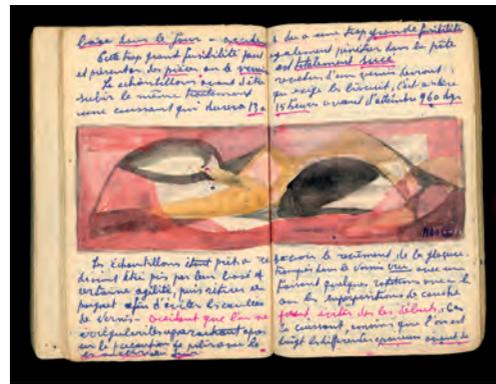


Fig. 24: Cahier de l'Ecole Polytechnique, Paris, 1939, London and Stoke-on-Trent, 1940-1943, 18.5 x 12 cm, Lacasse Family Collection.

mechanisms of the art market during his 1940-1946 absence.

In a violent reaction, Lacasse destroyed a large number of his paintings but soon regained strength from his mystical belief that *'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*. Soon after his return to Paris in 1946, Lacasse answered with his wonderful, richly textured series of so-called 'balancements' (Cat. no. 26). Advanced in composition, sophisticated and poetic, these works overshadow Poliakoff's contemporary research and form proof of Lacasse's ultimate poetic genius and spiritual superiority. They show Lacasse's perfect understanding and analysis of Abstraction, the result of decades of practice.

### Thirdly Lacasse's own psychology and strong desire for independence might have played a major role.

Whereas Poliakoff was an ambitious man of certain culture and elegance, Lacasse was the opposite. Proud to be working-class, Lacasse was stubborn and inflexible, clinging onto his freedom in his personal and professional life. Painting was his life and his prayer, his private redemption and therefore should never be sacrificed on the altar of commerce.

To keep his freedom, Lacasse had made many sacrifices. Instead of choosing the comfort of a cushioned life in Brussels as the son in law of the celebrated art dealer Pierre Lupsin, Lacasse took his wife to Paris to live in poverty in order to pursue his dream of being a free artist. In 1940, Lacasse's idealism made him follow Charles de Gaulle to England to serve the fight to free France from Nazi occupation. During his time in England, Lacasse was active as a painter and a ceramicist, leaving behind notebooks (Figs. 23-24). After six years of total silence, Lacasse was assumed dead by his wife and daughter.

His typical independent behaviour is well illustrated in three written exchanges between Lacasse and Sonia Delaunay dating 1953. At the request of Sonia Delaunay, Lacasse had agreed to exhibit at the 'Salon des Réalités Nouvelles'. However, when Lacasse learned from the organisers that they only accord three metres of hanging space, he explained to Sonia Delaunay that *'he renounces to take part in the 'Salon des Réalités Nouvelles' for I was only offered three metres*

*of hanging space and that this space would not be enough to represent me the way I should be.*<sup>56</sup> However much Lacasse was egocentric in wanting to keep his creative and personal freedom, he was also genuinely altruistic in sharing his knowledge and time with others. He was always of service to his friends Constantin Brancusi and Sonia Delaunay. He generously shared his knowledge with scores of young artists during the l'Equipe period and as soon as he could he deprived himself in order to buy his parents a more comfortable home in Tournai.<sup>57</sup>

**The methodical analysis of the historical documentation has shed new light onto the developments of Lacasse's work. Whereas his artistic development does not fit the mould of art historical orthodoxy, Lacasse's first and constant preoccupation was with light and the refraction thereof.**

By 1927 Lacasse had experimented with Impressionism, Realism, Fauvism, and Cubism. The definite date of 1919 as a terminus ante quem for Lacasse's Cubist works is now established. The influence of Robert Delaunay has never been contested, and his experiments with Orphism and with Rayonnism can now be traced back as early as 1919. The acquaintance with the work of Robert Delaunay gave shape to Lacasse's production in Italy during the early 1920s. Lastly the dates of 1931-32 have been firmly established as a terminus post quem for Lacasse's pure abstract works.

Not long after Maurits Bilcke discovered in 1959 Lacasse's *Cailloux* in the attic of his parental home in Tournai, voices have been raised that Lacasse made these works as a justification at a later date.<sup>58</sup> However, when one examines these works carefully, it is evident that the clumsy signature belongs to a barely literate youngster. In addition, taking into account the naïve and immature execution, the *Cailloux* hold no doubts to their authenticity.

Given Lacasse's psychology and the social circumstances, it is entirely acceptable that Lacasse had kept these works private for fear of being ridiculed again, as he had been at the time of execution during 1909-1914. The then illiterate teenager had been transformed into a literate thinker and writer at the time of Bilcke's discovery. Until then, Lacasse had not attributed much importance to these teenage works, which he had left behind out of embarrassment, to gather dust in his parental home in Tournai. It took a great intellectual such as Maurits Bilcke to win Lacasse's confidence and motivate him to be brave enough to share the *Cailloux* with the world. Lacasse for one was the first to be surprised at the stir these teenage works caused.

Lacasse was a pioneer in many ways, leaving behind a complex and challenging body of work. However, as a Classicist, Social Realist, a Fauve, a Cubist, a Tachist and an Abstractionist, Lacasse was always on the path of research to deal with the pictorial questions of how to best express light. Lacasse was a brilliant and gifted artist with an intellect, character, palette and style as multifaceted as the prism of light itself, creating his own universe in the Universe.

An Jo Fermon, June 2015

## NOTES

- 1 Georges DELIZÉE. *Joseph Lacasse: Un Peintre du Pays Blanc. Brussels*, 1927, p. 7.
- 2 Joseph LACASSE. 'Que la Lumière Soit', 1934, unpublished journals, chapter XVIII.
- 3 Georges DELIZÉE. *Joseph Lacasse: Un Peintre du Pays Blanc. Brussels*, 1927, p. 11 and p. 17.
- 4 Michel SEUPHOR. *L'Art Abstrait Vol 2: 1918-1938*. Maeght, Paris, 1972, p. 25, ill. 43, p. 31.
- 5 Michel SEUPHOR and Michel RAGON. *L'Art Abstrait Vol 3: 1939-1970*. Maeght, Paris, 1973, p. 77.
- 6 Facsimiles of these designs for carpets dating 1909 are kept in the Fonds Naessens, Archives de l'Art Contemporain, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de la Belgique, Brussels. Several originals of designs for carpets dating 1911 are kept in the Lacasse Family Archives.
- 7 More illustrations of proto-Cubist works from 1914-15 are illustrated in Marc RENWART. *Lacasse*, exhibition catalogue, Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de la Ville de Liège, and Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, 1994-1995, cat. ill. 35 - 37.
- 8 Georges DELIZÉE. *Joseph Lacasse: Un Peintre du Pays Blanc. Brussels*, 1927, p.18.
- 9 IDEM, p. 19.
- 10 Lacasse irregularly attended school until the age of eleven. Under the positive and academic influence of his wife Stéphanie Lupsin, Lacasse was thought to properly read and write during the 1920s. Being highly intelligent, Lacasse later became a great writer and thinker. In reference to his illiteracy, Lacasse frequently signed with his thumbprint.
- 11 Marc RENWART. *Lacasse*, exhibition catalogue, Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain de la Ville de Liège, and Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris, 1994 - 1995, cat. ill. 32.
- 12 Georges DELIZÉE. *Lacasse: Un Peintre du Pays Blanc. Brussels*, cat. ill.
- 13 IDEM, cat. ill.
- 14 IDEM, p. 14.
- 15 IBID.
- 16 IDEM, p. 24.
- 17 'Nos artistes à l'étranger', *Courrier de l'Escaut*, 16 July 1925; Théodule, BONDROIT. 'Un élève de Maurice Denis: M. Joseph Lacasse', *Revue catholique des idées et des faits*, Nov. 1926, pp. 10-11.
- 18 Stéphanie Lupsin met Lacasse around 1919-1920 at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. An artist herself, she was the daughter of the Brussels art dealer Pierre Lupsin, an international expert who dealt through the Galerie de la Grande Place and Galerie de la Reine. In 1922 Pierre Lupsin had given Lacasse two one-man shows, and hoped that the talented Lacasse would collaborate with him.
- 19 The couple remained in the Impasse Ronsin until 1964, when they moved to Villa Kellerman (Paris, 13ème,) where Lacasse lived and worked until his death.
- 20 Robert GARRIC. 'Dans l'atelier de Joseph Lacasse', *Nouvelle revue des jeunes*, 10 Jan. 1930.
- 21 Georges DELIZÉE. *Joseph Lacasse: Un Peintre du Pays Blanc. Brussels*, 1927, p. 26.
- 22 Note from Lacasse to Sonia Delaunay dated 22/12/1952, Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 23 The 1st, 4th and 5th days of the *Sept Jours de la Création* series were completed during 1949-1950 in an almost hard-edge abstract style. At present the paintings remain in the Collection of Belfius, Brussels, Belgium.
- 24 Georges MONMARCHÉ. 'Joseph Lacasse: Peintre du travail', *La Nouvelle revue des jeunes*, 10 Jan. 1930, p. 67.
- 25 Jean-Philippe REY. 'l'Affaire des fresques de Juvisy. Chapelle dominicaine et iconoclasme épiscopal', *Mémoire dominicaine*, vol. 8, spring 1996, pp. 163-189.
- 26 Joseph LACASSE. 'Que la lumière soit', 1934, unpublished journals, chapter XVIII.
- 27 Georges MONMARCHÉ. 'L'Equipe, une exposition de peinture', *Le Petit Démocrate*, 19 Dec. 1937.
- 28 Gaston DIEHL. 'Tous solidaires', *Tribune des Jeunes*, (published between 28 Feb. and 14 March 1938).
- 29 R. G. 'Veronesi a Parigi', *Domus*, March 1939.
- 30 Joseph FOLLINET. 'Exposition Lacasse', *Sept, hebdomadaire du temps présent*, 23 April 1937.
- 31 Robert GARRIC. 'Dans l'atelier de Joseph Lacasse', *La Nouvelle revue des jeunes*, 10 Jan. 1930.
- 32 *L'Équipe des Arts et des Lettres*, no. 1, 15 May 1939. Lacasse's interest in 'child art' or 'peasant art' goes back to 1914. In Germany, interest in the art of the mentally ill, along with that of children and 'peasant art' was first demonstrated by the members of 'Der Blaue Reiter', including Wassily Kandinsky, August Macke, Franz Marc and Alexej von Jawlenski. The term 'Art Brut' was first coined by Jean Dubuffet and André Breton with the foundation of 'Compagnie de l'Art Brut' in 1948.
- 33 Georges MONMARCHÉ. 'Lacasse 1938. Le Caractère de cette œuvre en fait un peu l'illustration de notre esprit', *Petit Démocrate*, 22 May 1938.
- 34 Michel SEUPHOR. *La peinture abstraite en Flandre*, Brussels, 1963, p. 138.  
After 1932, Lacasse only used figuration for portrait painting.
- 35 Maurits Bilcke (1913-1993) was a renowned writer on abstract art in Belgium, having published monographs on Victor Servranckx, Jo Delahaut, Jan Cobbaert, Armand Vanderlick and others.  
Michel Seuphor (1901-1999) was the author of *Dictionnaire sur l'art abstrait* (1957), *l'Art abstrait en Flandre* (1963), *l'Art abstrait*, 4 Vol. (Maeght, 1971-1974), which remain seminal works of reference for Abstraction from its beginnings to its maturity.

- Celebrated anarchist and defender of the proletarian cause, author of the manifesto 'Nouvel âge littéraire' (1930), founder of the magazines 'l'Equipe' (1938), 'Nouvel Age' (1931), 'Prolétariat' (1933-34), 'À contre-courant' (1935-36) and 'Maintenant' (1945-48), Henry Poulaille (1896-1980) was an intimate friend of Lacasse and an eye-witness to Lacasse's abstract development throughout the 1930s.
- Raymond Cogniat (1896-1977) was the artistic director of the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, during its International exhibition of Surrealism (1938) and was head editor of the Arts section of 'Le Figaro' during 1957-1977.
- Michel Ragon (b.1924) is an eminent French art historian, writer and critic who as of 1946 wrote extensively about Abstraction in general and Atlan, Hartung, Lacasse, Poliakoff and Soulages in particular.
- Roger Bordier (b.1923) was an art critic for 'Art Today' and a professor at the Paris National School of Decorative Arts, where he taught history of modern art and sociology of contemporary aesthetics.
- Willy Van den Bussche (1942-2013) was director of the Ostend Museum of Fine Arts, Belgium and an authority on the Belgian avant-garde.
- Marc Renwart made the first comprehensive anthology of Lacasse's career at the occasion of the 1994-1995 Lacasse museum retrospective held in the cities of Liege and Paris.
- 36 Joseph CHAZADES. 'Le Cas Joseph Lacasse ou Poliakoff avant Poliakoff, de Staël avant de Staël', *l'Oeil*, no. 245, 1975.
- 37 Gérard DUROZOL. *Serge Poliakoff*. Paris, 2001, p. 23.
- 38 Gérard DUROZOL and Alexis POLIAKOFF. *Serge Poliakoff. Catalogue Raisonné*, Vol. 1, 1922-1954, Paris, 2004-2005, p. 222; Françoise BRÜTSCH. *Serge Poliakoff 1900-1969*. Neuchâtel, 1993, p. 168.
- 39 Françoise BRÜTSCH. *Poliakoff 1900-1969*. Neuchâtel, 1993, p. 15.
- 40 Michel RAGON. *Vingt-cinq ans d'art vivant*. Tournai, 1969, p.133.
- 41 Robert DELAUNAY. *Du Cubisme à l'Art Abstrait*, unedited documents published by Pierre FRANCASTEL, Paris, 1957. Robert Delaunay states that frequent visitors to his evening classes were: Gleizes, Brunet, Rambosson, Péron, Andoul, Lacasse, Gatién, (...), Poliakoff.
- 42 Gerard DUROZOL. *Serge Poliakoff*. Paris, 2001, p. 21.
- 43 Letter dated 21/12/1952 from Henry Poulaille to Sonia Delaunay, Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 44 Letter dated 05/04/1988 from Marcel Van Jole to Mme Francine Lacasse. Mr Van Jole was an eminent art historian, co-founder and director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp. Previously he had made his conversations with Poliakoff public in the 1974 monograph, *Joseph Lacasse par lui-même*.
- 45 Gérard DUROZOL, *Serge Poliakoff*. Paris, 2001, p. 23.
- 46 Françoise BRÜTSCH. *Serge Poliakoff 1900-1969*. Neuchâtel, 1993, p. 27 and p. 170.
- 47 'Poliakoff regularly visited Lacasse; he would remember fifteen years later the works which (Lacasse) executed in front of his eyes. That Poliakoff would have remembered the themes of fractured stones developed by Lacasse, this appears in fact totally certain.' Michel SEUPHOR. *La peinture abstraite en Flandre*, Brussels, 1963, p. 138.
- 48 Letter dated 21/12/1952 from Henry Poulaille to Sonia Delaunay, Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 49 Galerie Denise René: *Poliakoff*: 11 Feb. - 2 March 1950 and *Lacasse* from 5 April - 28 April 1951. Galerie Dina Vierny: *Lacasse*: 12 - 31 Oct. 1951 and *Poliakoff*: 21 Nov. - 12 Dec. 1951.
- 50 Letter by Sonia Delaunay dated 06/01/1953, addressed to Henry Poulaille, auctioned by Brissonneau, Paris, 31/03/2011, lot 297; a copy of this letter is also present in the Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 51 Letter by Sonia Delaunay dated 06/01/1953, addressed to Henry Poulaille, auctioned by Brissonneau, Paris, 31/03/2011, lot 297; a copy of this letter is also present in the Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 52 Letter from Sonia Delaunay dated 11/01/1955, addressed to Joseph Lacasse, Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 53 Letter from Sonia Delaunay dated 05/04/1955, addressed to Lacasse, Lacasse Family Archives.
- 54 Undated letter from Sonia Delaunay to Lacasse, Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 55 Letter from Henry Poulaille to Sonia Delaunay, dated 21/12/1952, Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 56 Correspondence between Sonia Delaunay and Lacasse dated 02/06/1953, 11/06/1953 and 17/07/1953, Archives Delaunay, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre de documentation et de recherche du Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.
- 57 Pierre JOOSTENS. *Joseph Lacasse: artiste peintre et sculpteur*, Tournai, 2013, p. 8.
- 58 Even a carbon dating procedure of the paper has been executed, the result of which confirms the authenticity of the paper.

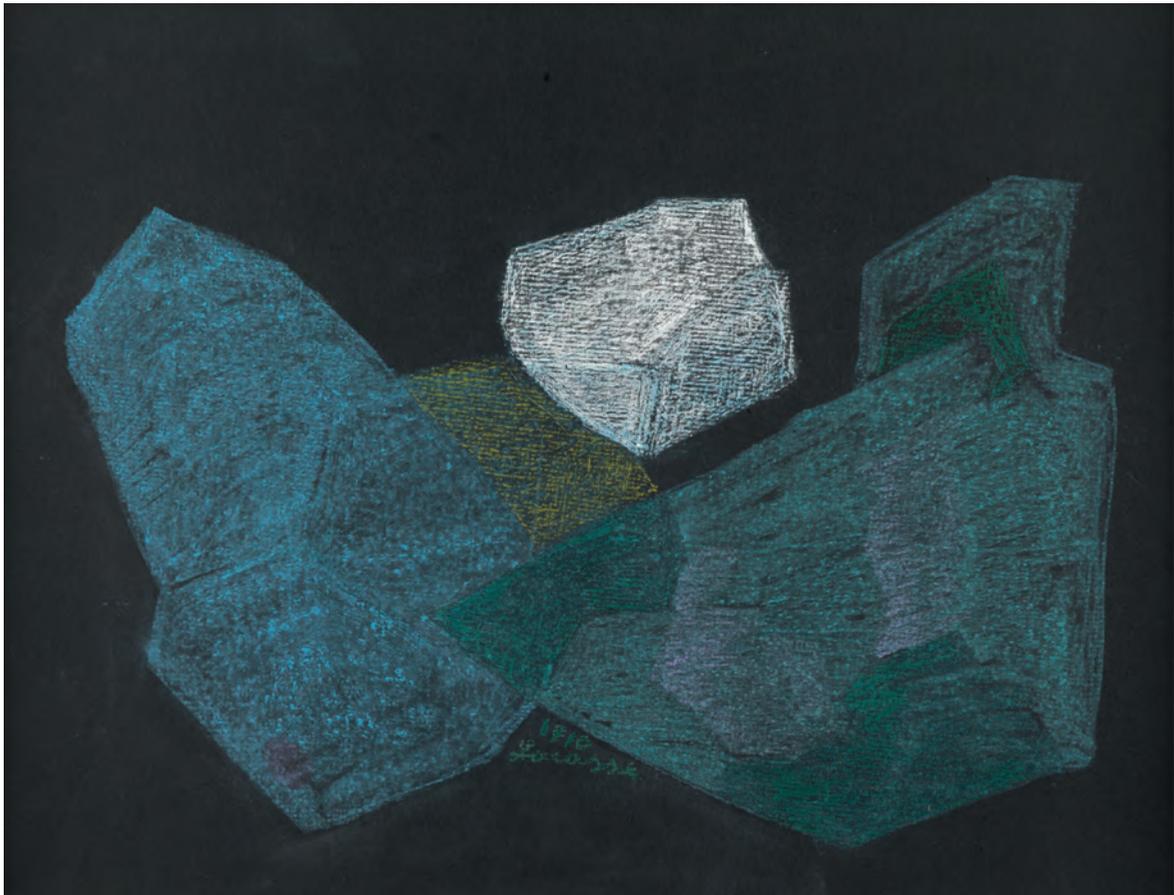
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- Collection of correspondance between Joseph Lacasse and Halima Naclez of Drian Galleries, London, Private Collection, London.



1. **Cailloux** 1910  
Pastel and ink on black paper  
50 x 64.5 cm  
Signed and dated lower right  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 9150



2. **Caillou** 1910

Pastel on paper laid on board  
49 x 64 cm

Signed and dated lower centre  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 203

3. **Carrières - Dominante jaune** 1927 - 1957

Oil on canvas

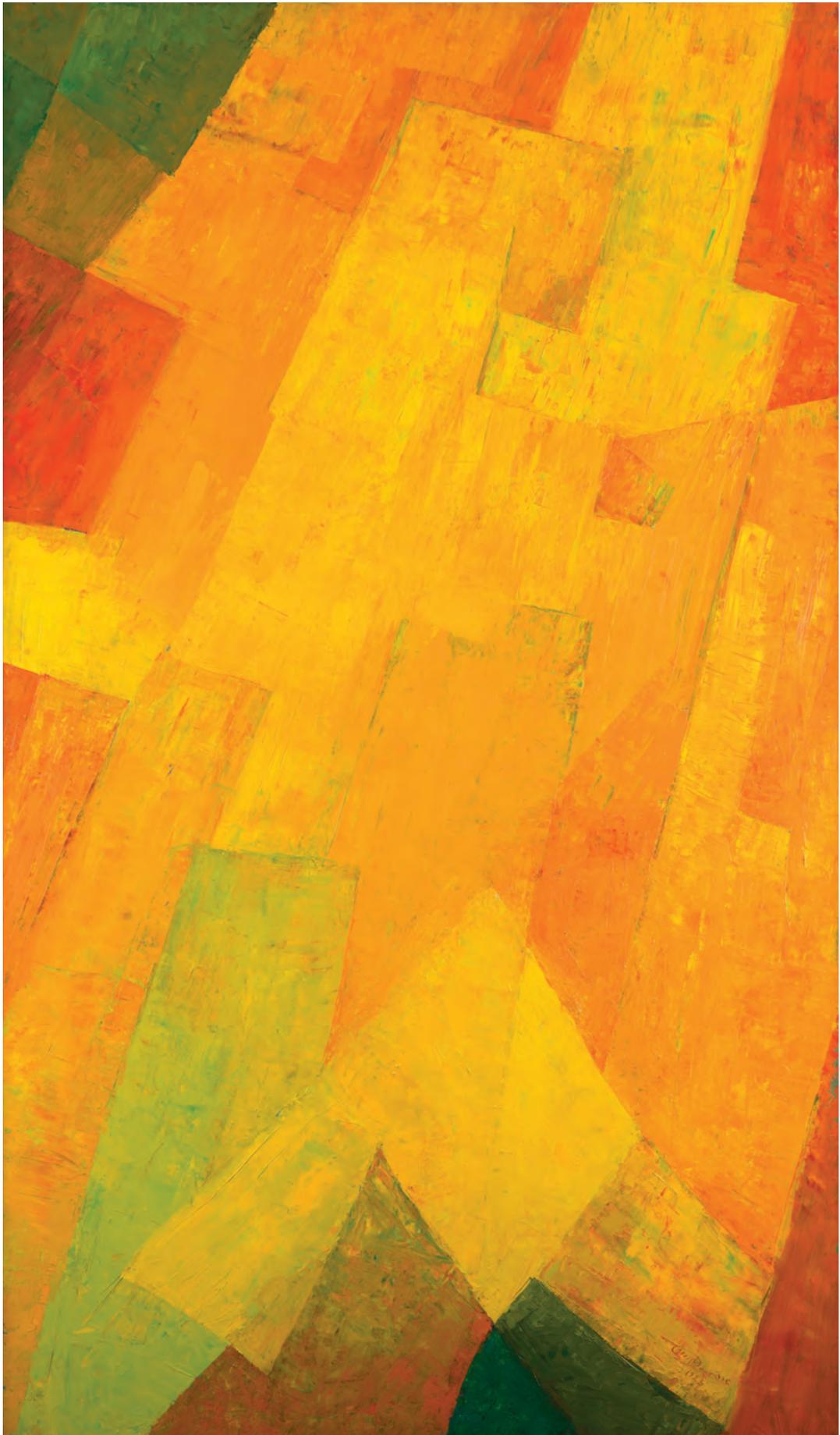
197 x 115 cm

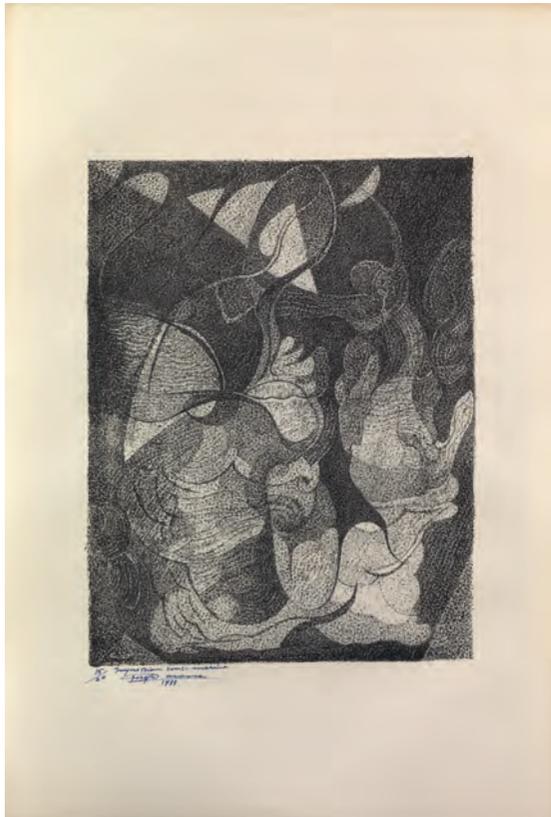
Signed and dated lower right

Signed verso

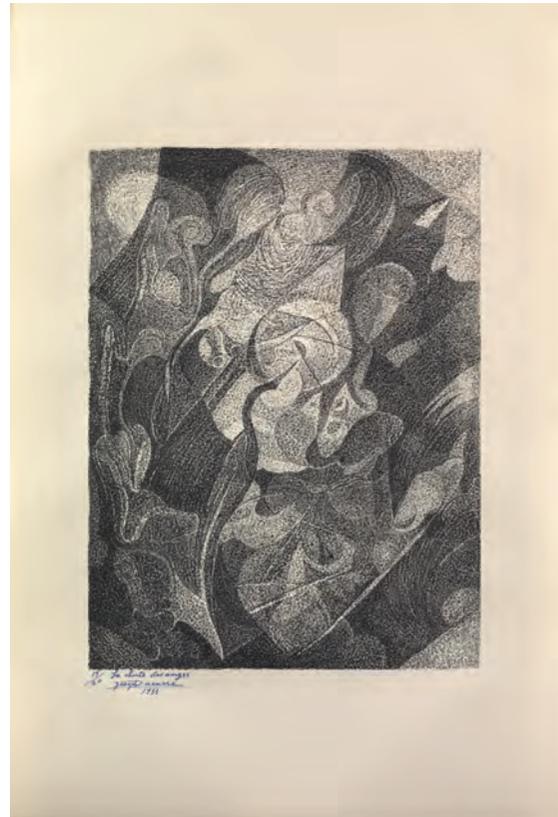
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 897

LITERATURE: BILCKE, Maurits, Roger BORDIER, Jacques MEURIS and Henry POULAILLE. *Joseph Lacasse par lui-même*. Antwerp, 1974, ill. p. 171.





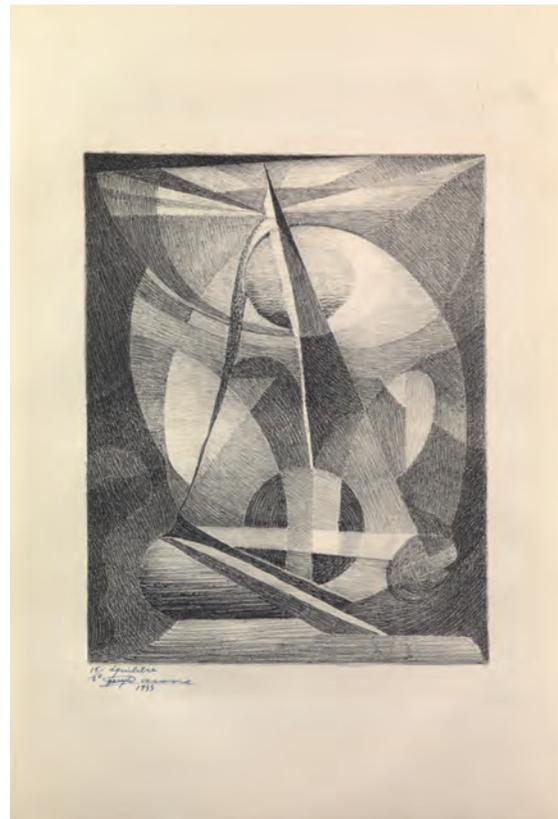
**Impression sous-marine**  
(Dia no. 2546)



**La chute des anges**  
(Dia no. 2547)



**La chute des anges**  
(Dia no. 2548)



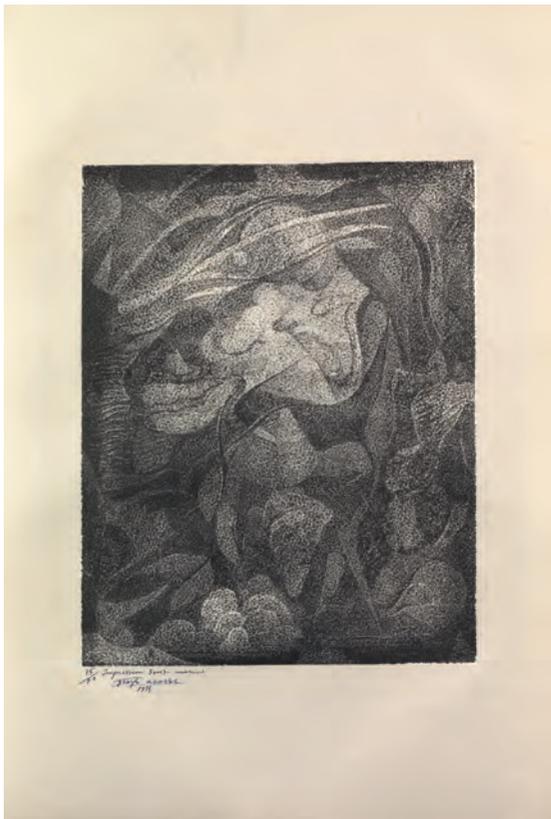
**Equilibre**  
(Dia no. 2549)



**Impression sous-marine**  
(Dia no. 2550)



**La Naissance**  
(Dia no. 2551)



**Impression sous-marine**  
(Dia no. 2550)

**4. A set of seven Lithographs**

1933

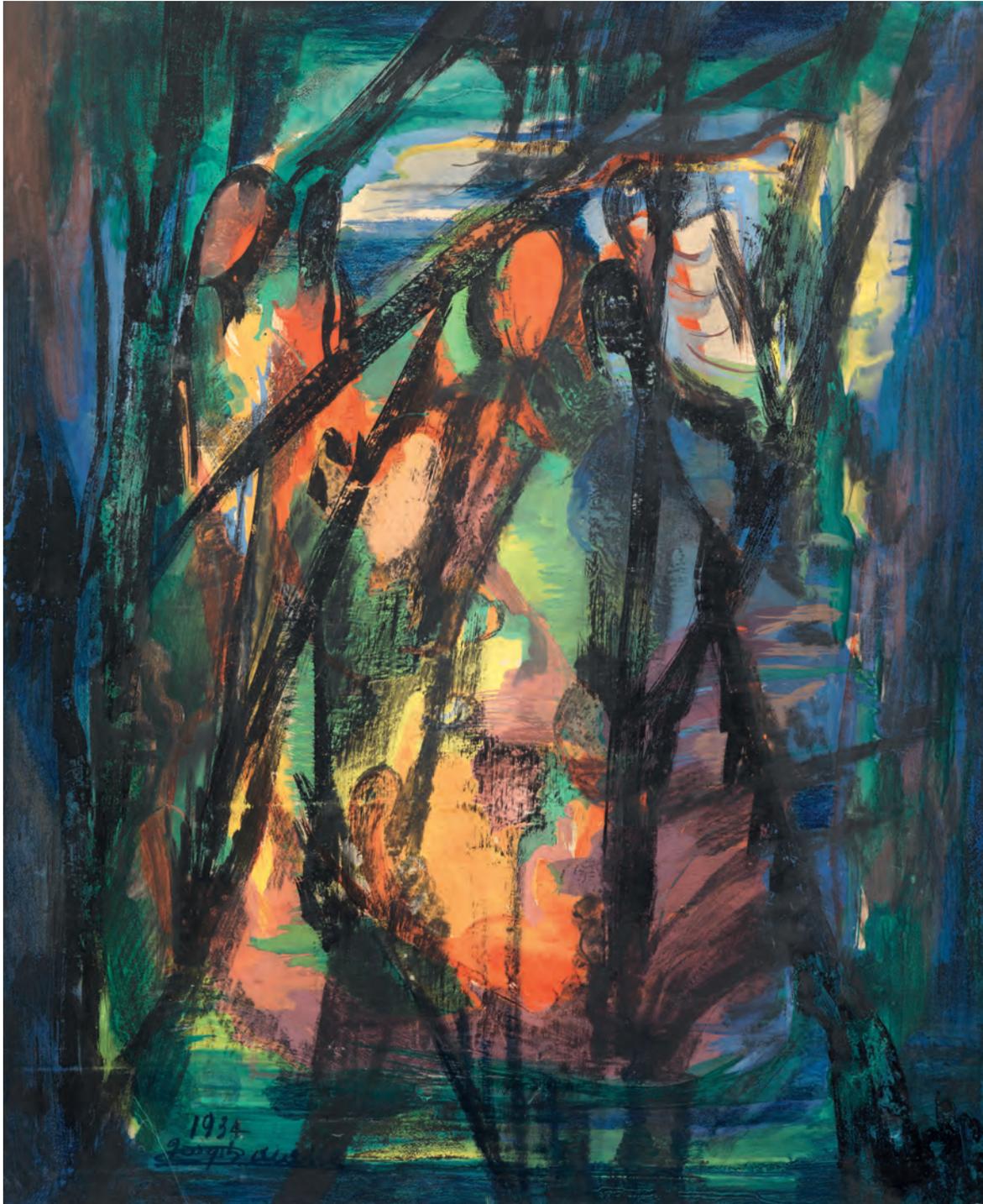
Lithograph on Arches paper

Image size: 34.5 x 26.7 cm

Paper size: 56.5 x 38 cm

Edition of 20

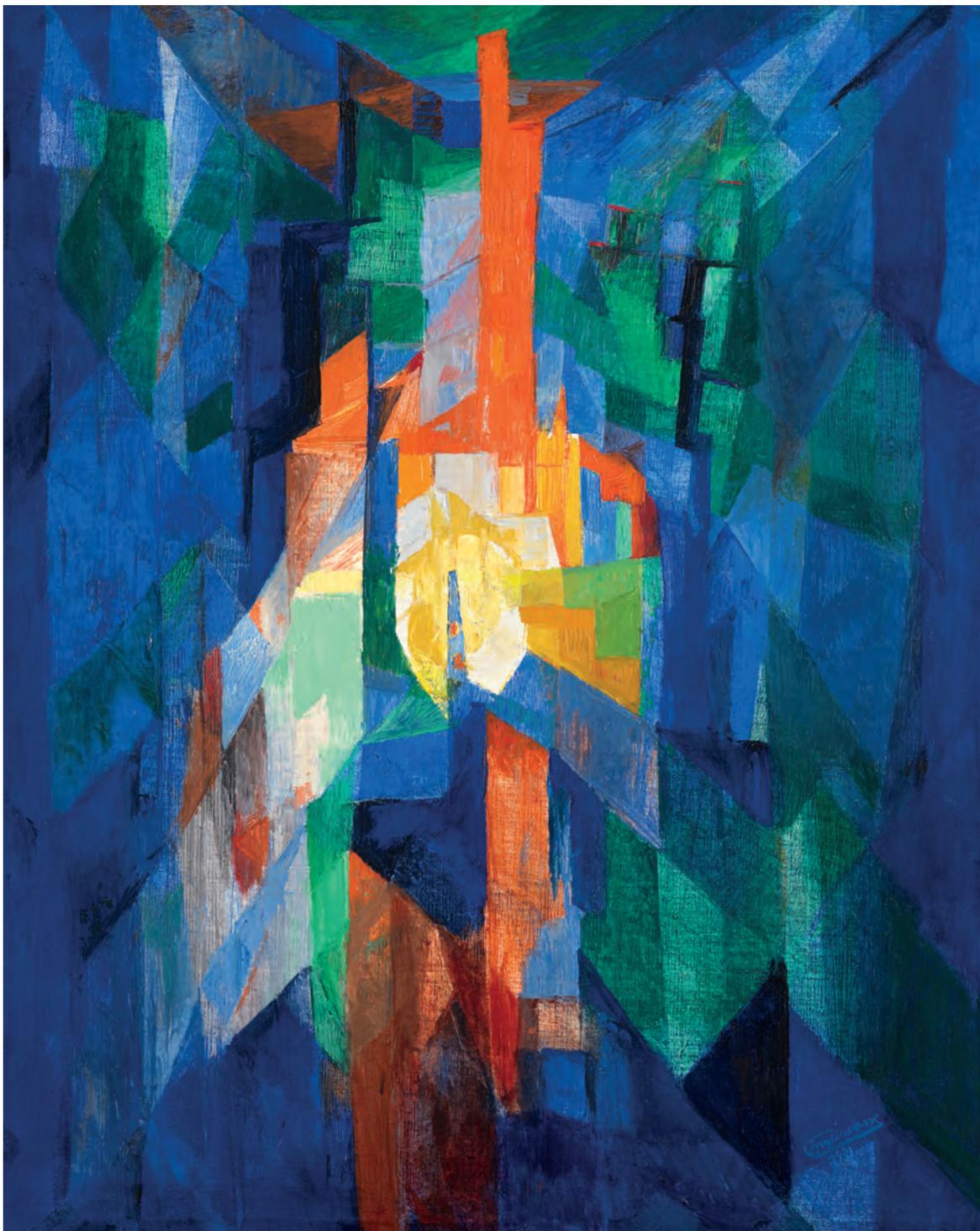
Signed, dated, titled and inscribed lower left



**5. Composition** 1934

Gouache, oil and watercolour  
55.5 x 45 cm

Signed, dated and fingerprinted lower left  
Signed, dated and fingerprinted verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 27/84



6. **Rayonnement** 1931

Oil on canvas  
98 x 79 cm

Signed and dated lower right  
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 9236



7. **La découverte de l'univers** 1935

Gouache and crayon

Image size: 28 x 36.7 cm

Paper size: 38 x 48 cm

Signed and dated lower left

Fingerprinted lower right

Signed, dated and fingerprinted verso

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 16/23



8. **La promenade** 1935

Gouache and crayon  
Image size: 28 x 39.5 cm  
Paper size: 38.3 x 50.5 cm

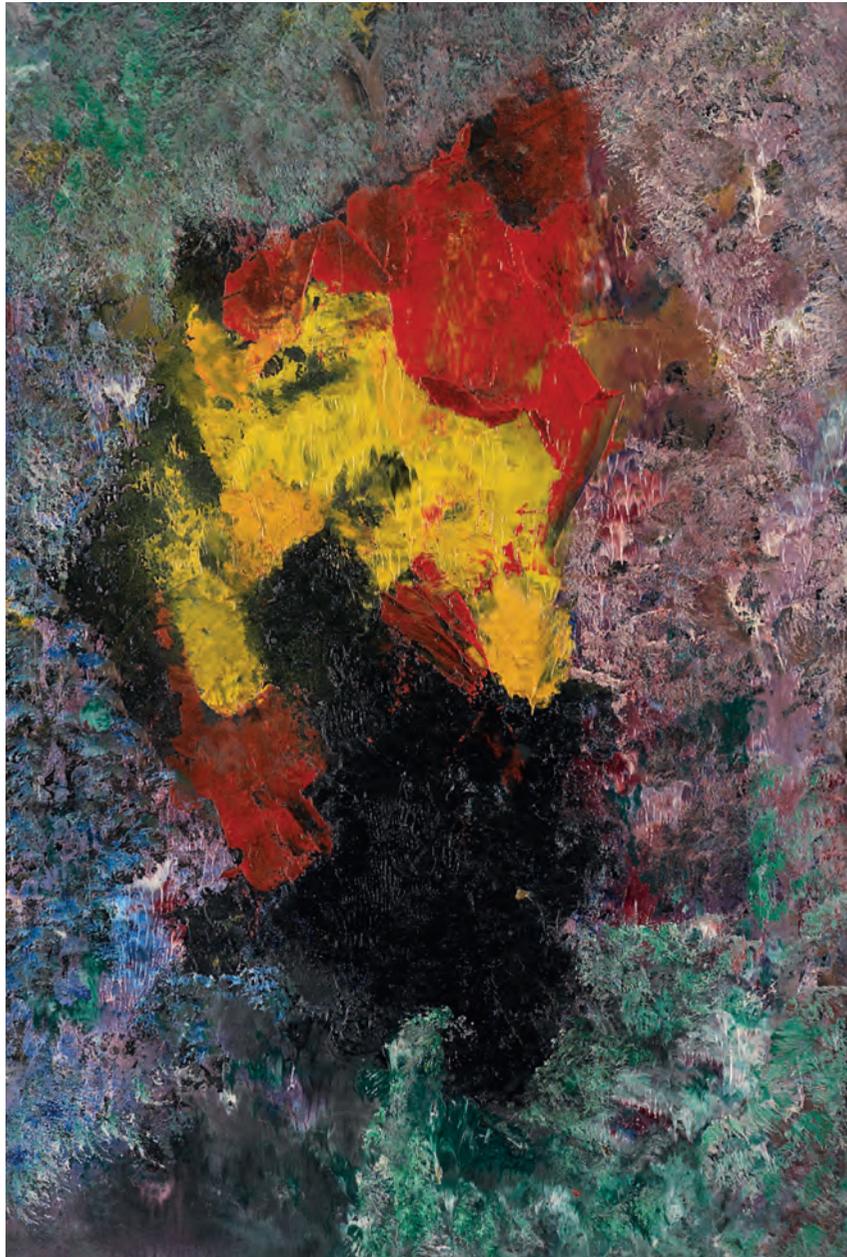
Signed, dated and fingerprinted lower left  
Signed, dated and fingerprinted verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 16/24



9. **Tachisme** 1935

Oil on canvas  
19 x 24 cm

Signed with monogram and dated lower left  
Signed, dated, inscribed and fingerprinted verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 2429



10. **Tachisme** 1937

Oil on paper laid on hardboard  
24 x 16 cm

Dated lower left

Signed and dated verso

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1814



11. **Tachisme** c.1935-37

Oil on canvas  
16 x 22 cm

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1262



12. **Tachisme** 1937

Oil on paper laid on canvas  
24 x 19 cm

Signed with monogram and dated lower left  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 2438



13. **Recherche** 1936

Oil on canvas  
55 x 38 cm

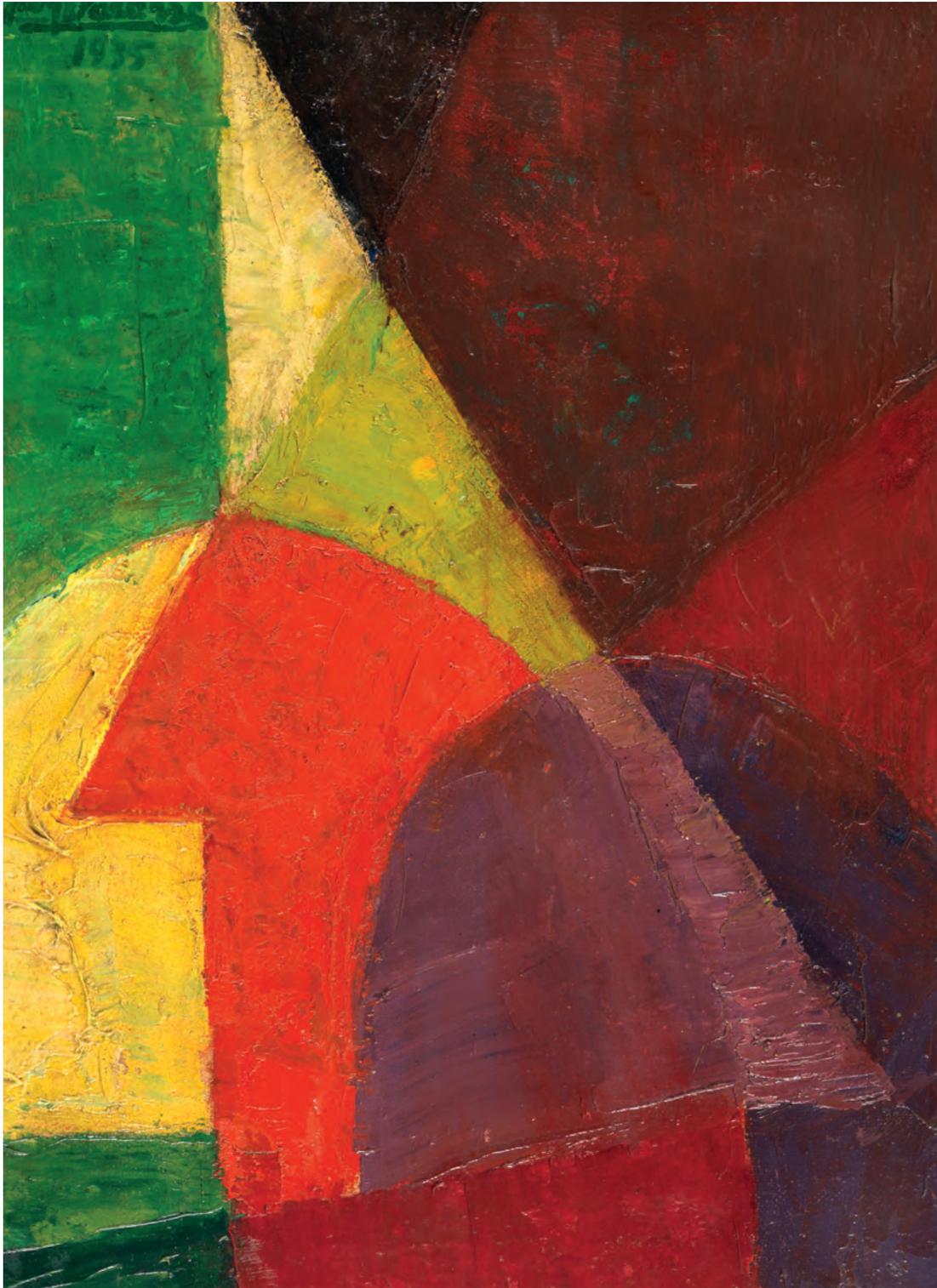
Signed lower left  
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 976



**14. Mouvement** 1937

Oil on canvas  
74 x 100.5 cm

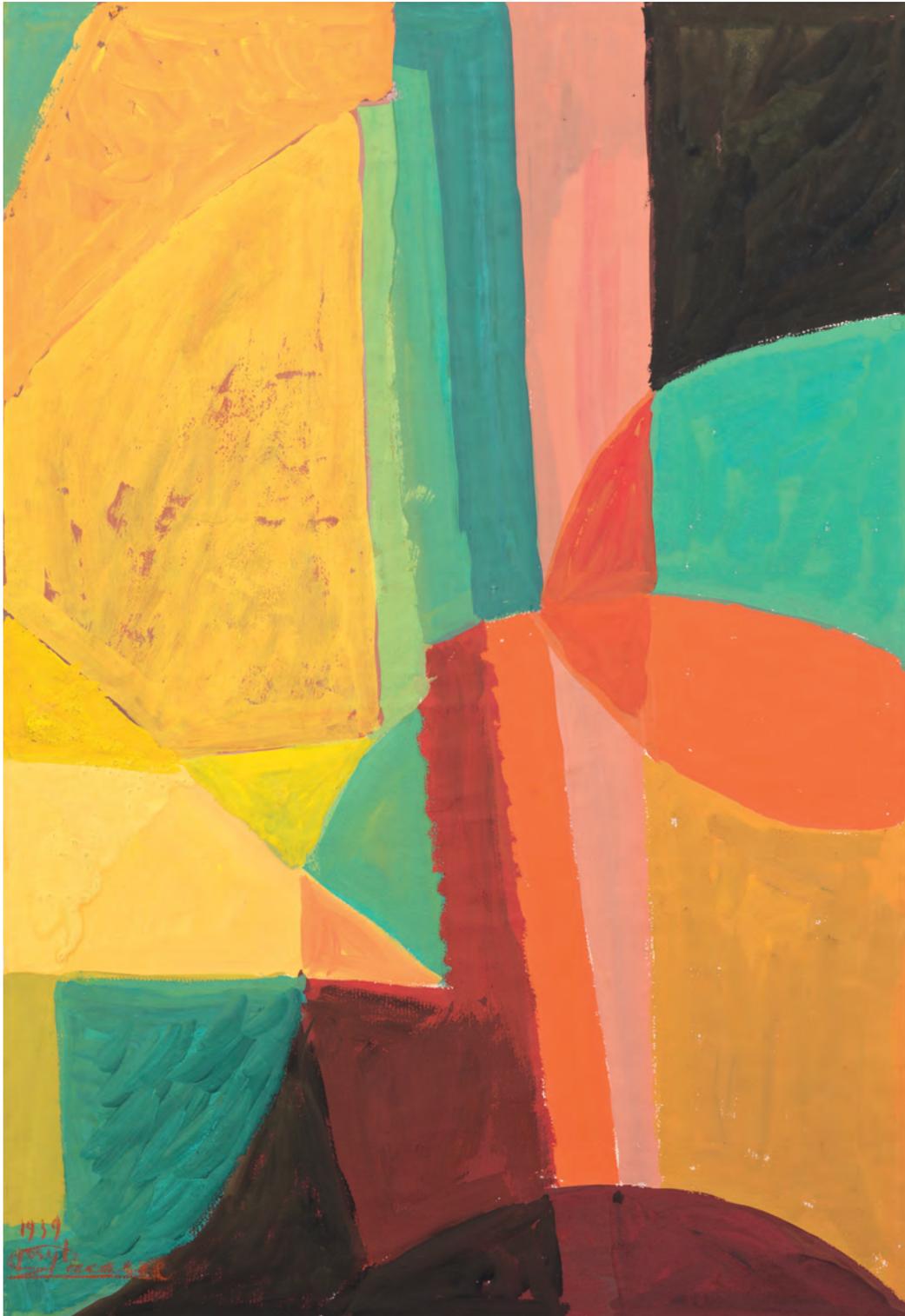
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 937



15. **Espace** 1935

Oil on canvas  
33 x 24 cm

Signed and dated upper left  
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 2406



**16. Reflets** 1939

Gouache

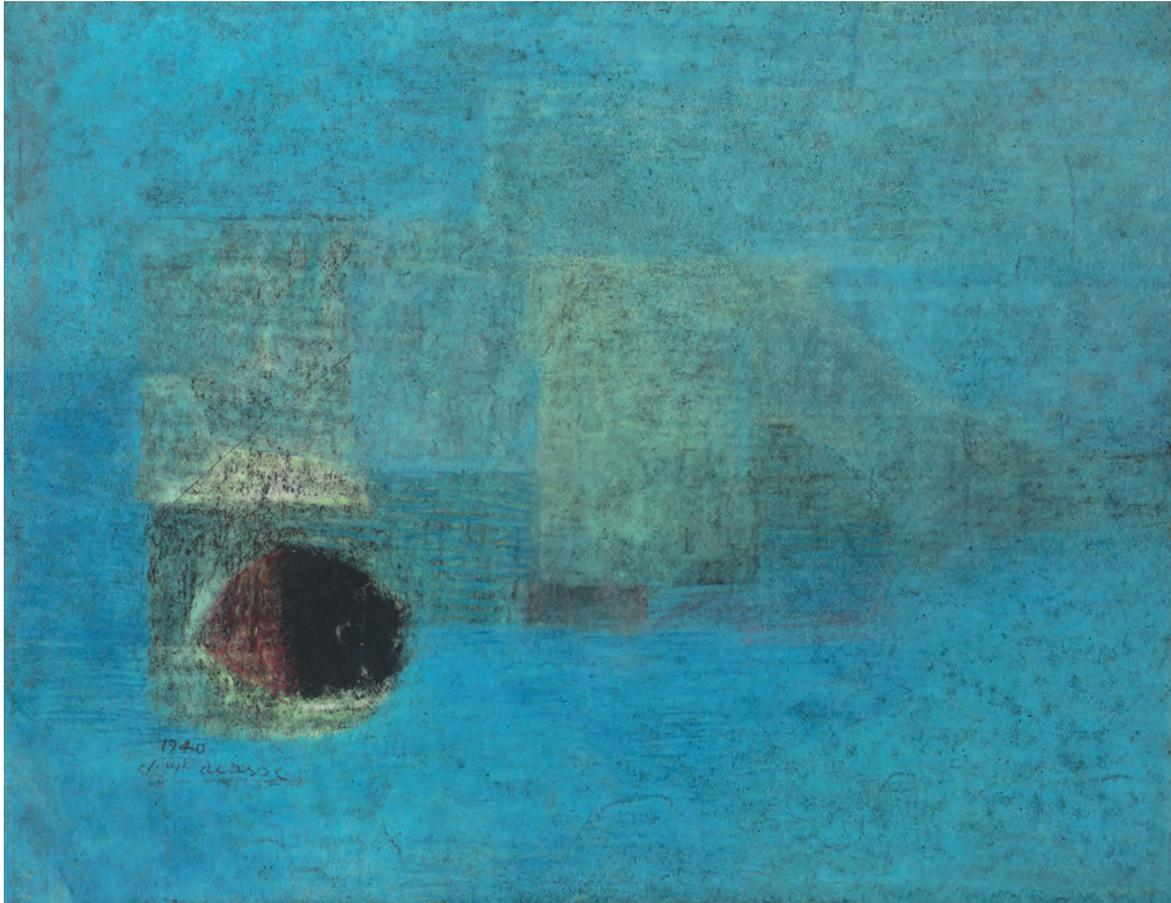
Image size: 49 x 34 cm

Paper size: 62 x 48 cm

Signed and dated lower left

Signed, dated and fingerprinted verso

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 16/32



17. **Méditation** 1940

Pastel on black paper  
50 x 65 cm

Signed and dated lower right  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 20/98



18. **Cailloux** 1940

Pastel and charcoal on blue paper  
50 x 65 cm

Signed and dated lower left  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 20/99



**19. Composition** 1940

Gouache, crayon and watercolour

Image size: 34 x 49 cm

Paper size: 48 x 63 cm

Signed and dated lower left

Signed, dated and fingerprinted verso

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 28/23



**20. Composition** 1940

Gouache

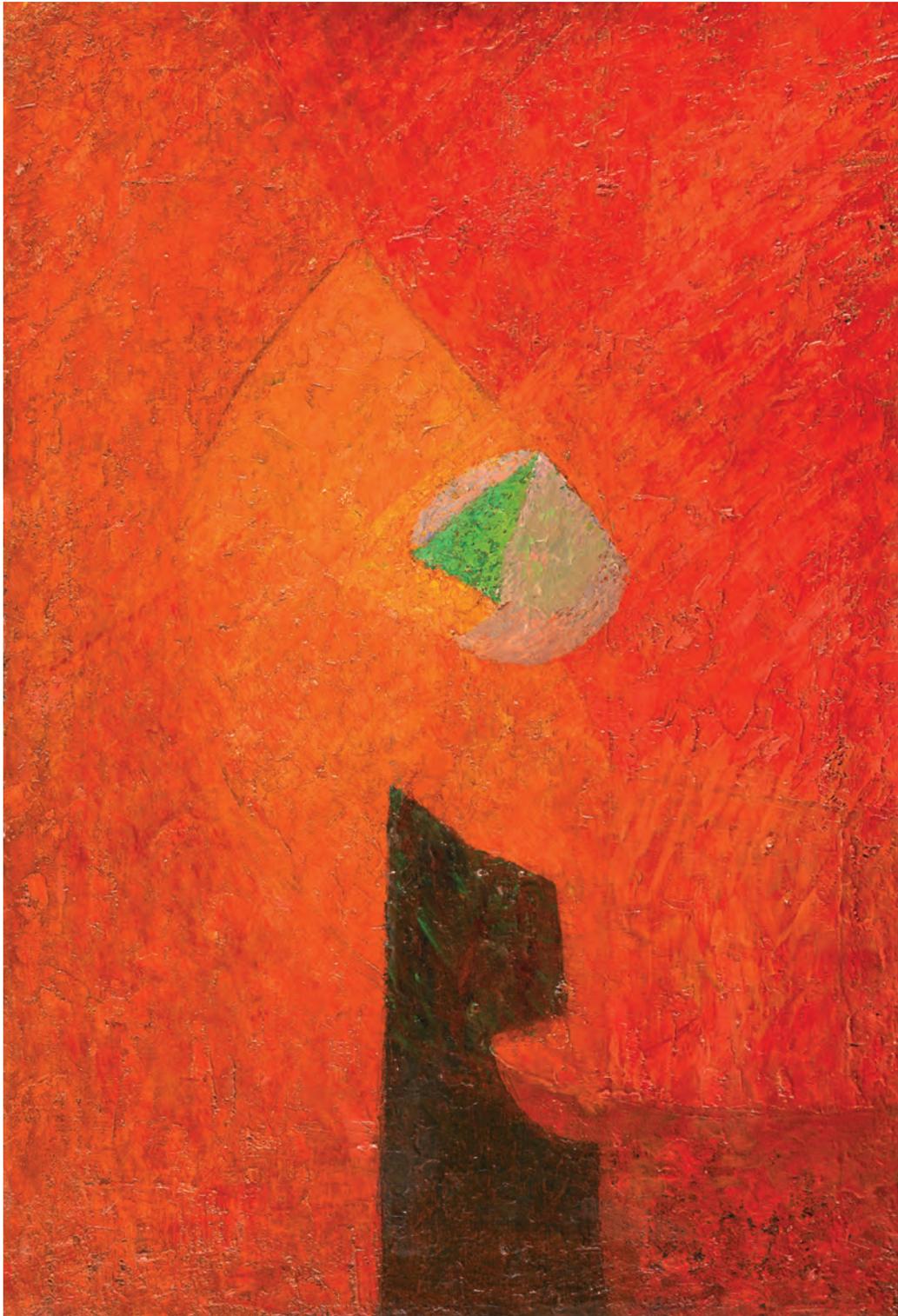
Image size: 36 x 51.5 cm

Paper size: 48 x 63 cm

Signed and dated lower right

Signed, dated and fingerprinted verso

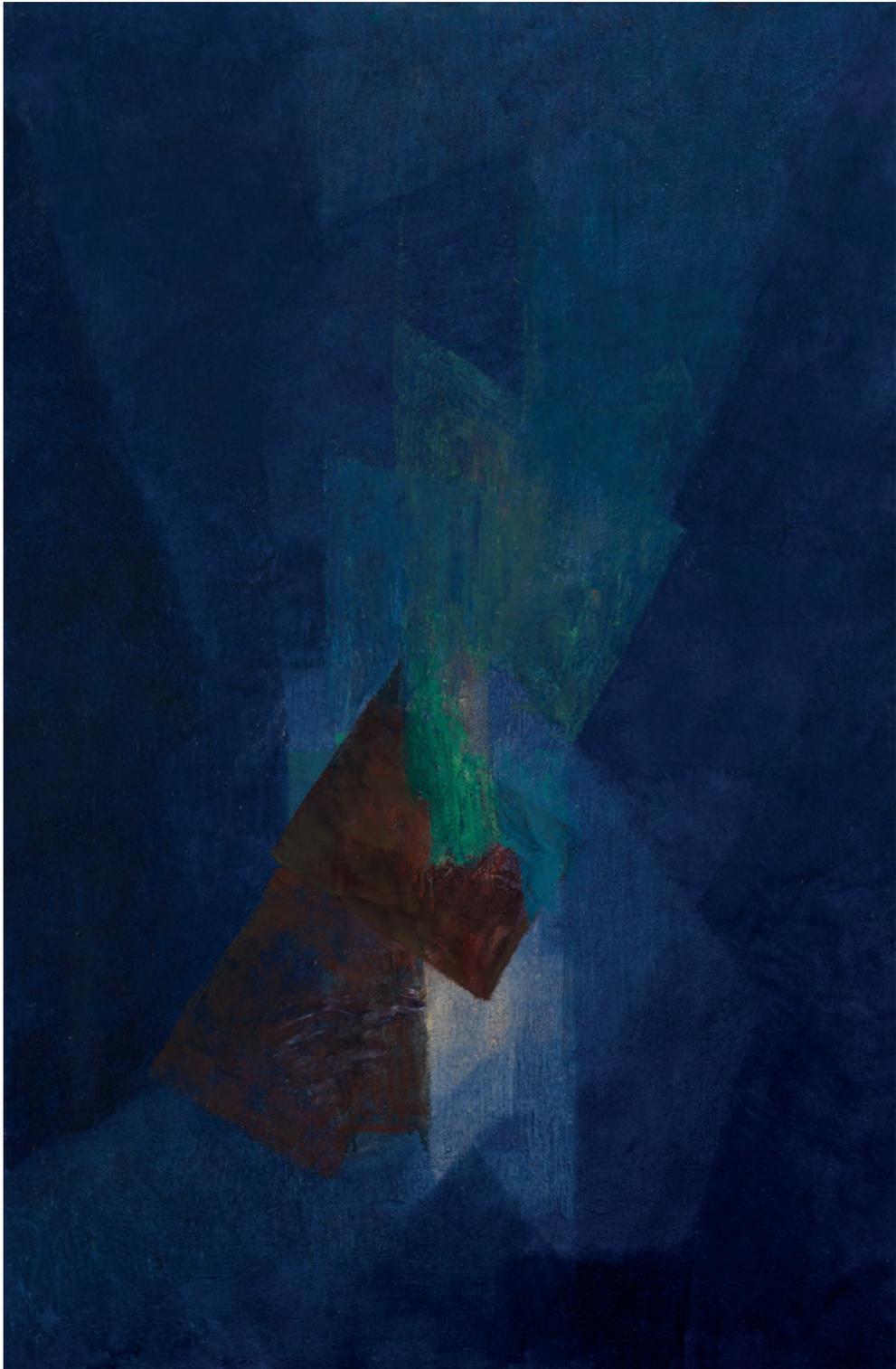
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 28/25



21. **Lumière** c.1940

Oil on canvas  
65 x 37 cm

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1265

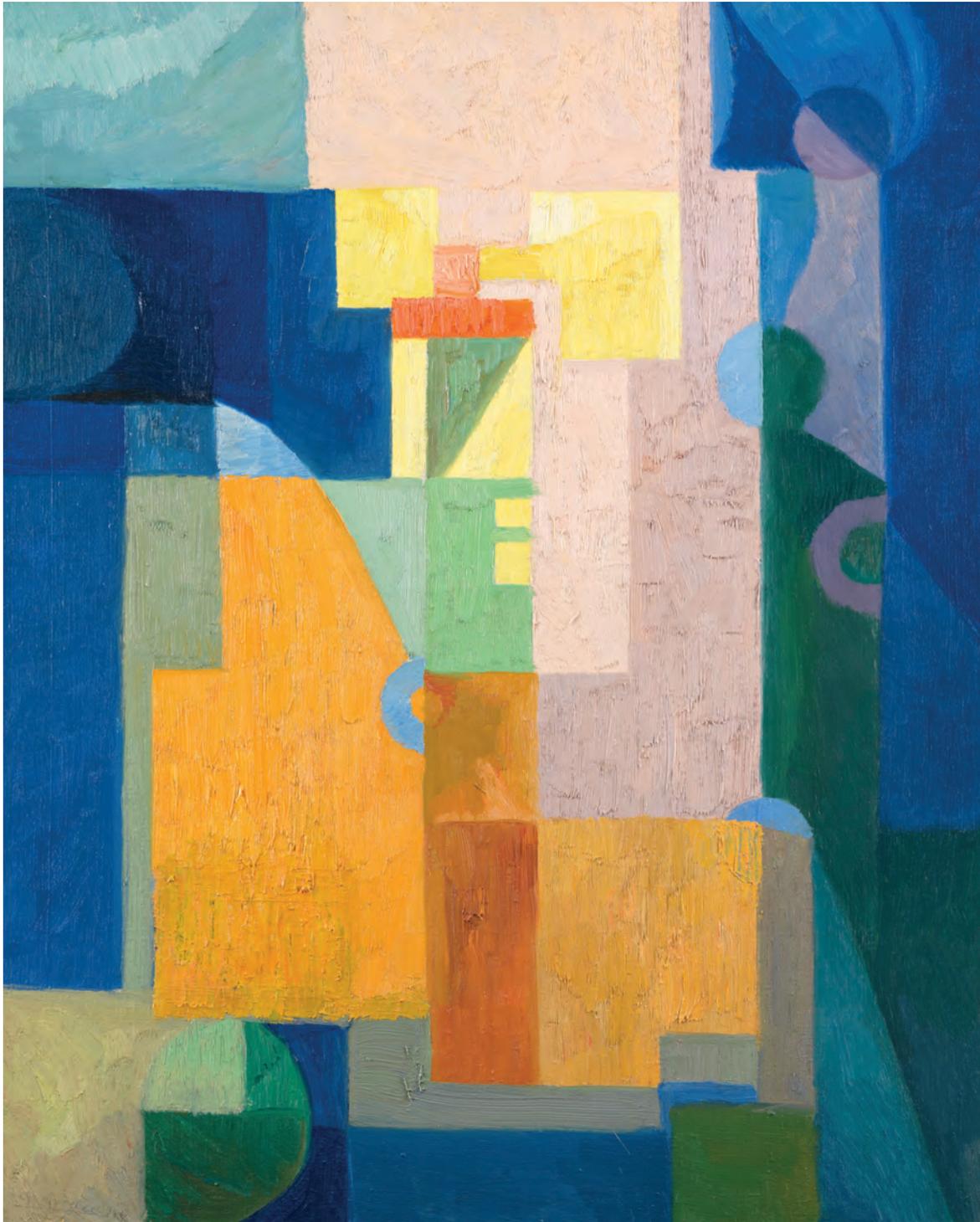


22. **Signal** c.1948

Oil on canvas  
100 x 65 cm

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 627

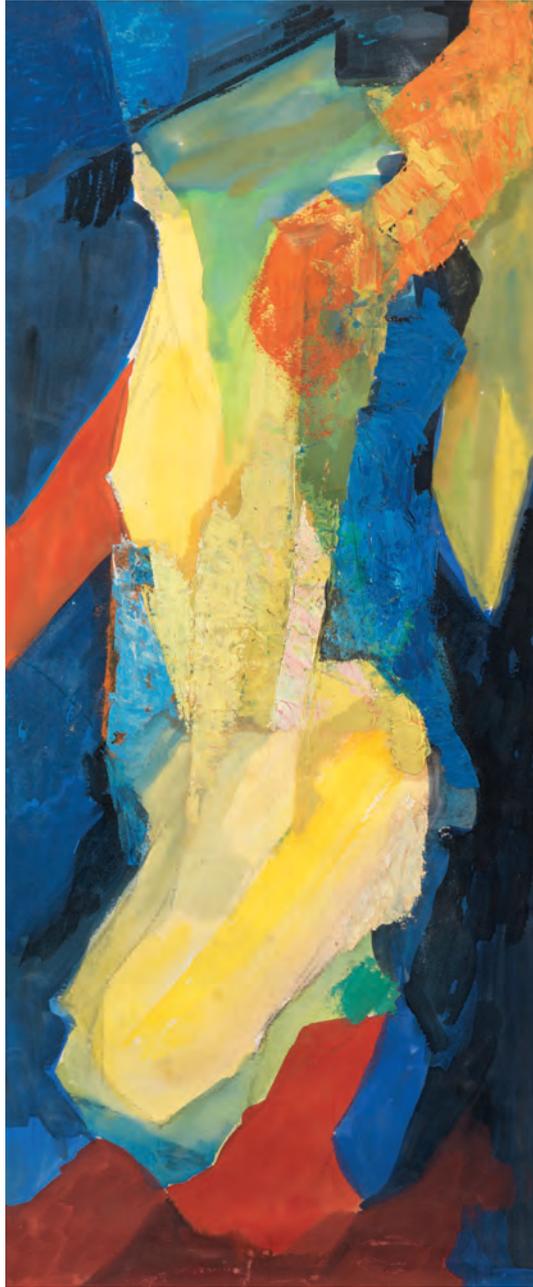
EXHIBITED: Galerie d'Art Ravenstein, Brussels.



23. **Composition simultanée** 1946

Oil on canvas  
81 x 65 cm

Signed lower left  
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1230



**24. Recherche** 1947

Watercolour, oil, gouache and pencil

Image size: 47.5 x 20 cm

Paper size: 50 x 27.5 cm

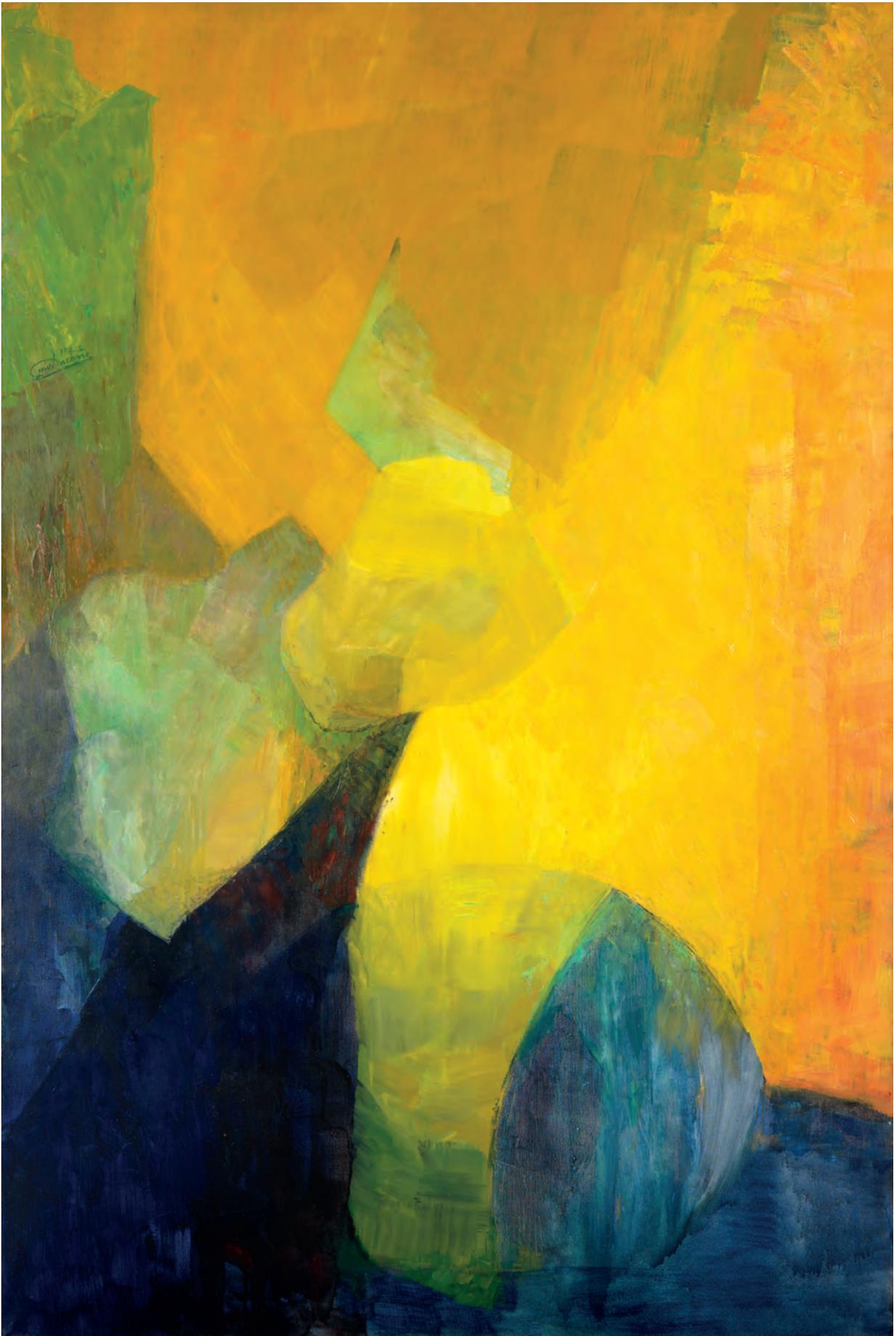
Signed, dated and titled verso

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 29/19

25. **Vérité** 1947

Oil on canvas  
195 x 130 cm

Signed and dated upper left  
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 533



26. **Balancement** 1948

Oil on canvas  
100 x 65 cm

Signed and dated twice upper right  
Signed and dated verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 668





**27. Recherche** 1949

Oil on canvas  
60.5 x 37 cm

Signed, dated and titled verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1264



28. **Continu spatial** 1951

Oil on canvas  
100 x 73 cm

Signed and dated upper left  
Signed and dated '1951.4.4' verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 780

29. **Dominante bleue** 1955- 1956

Oil on canvas  
246 x 105 cm

Signed and dated verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 9235





30. **Espace** 1956

Oil on canvas  
92 x 73 cm

Signed and dated lower right  
Signed and dated verso

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 750



**31. Mouvement** c.1957

Oil on Styrofoam  
60.5 x 99 cm

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 4018

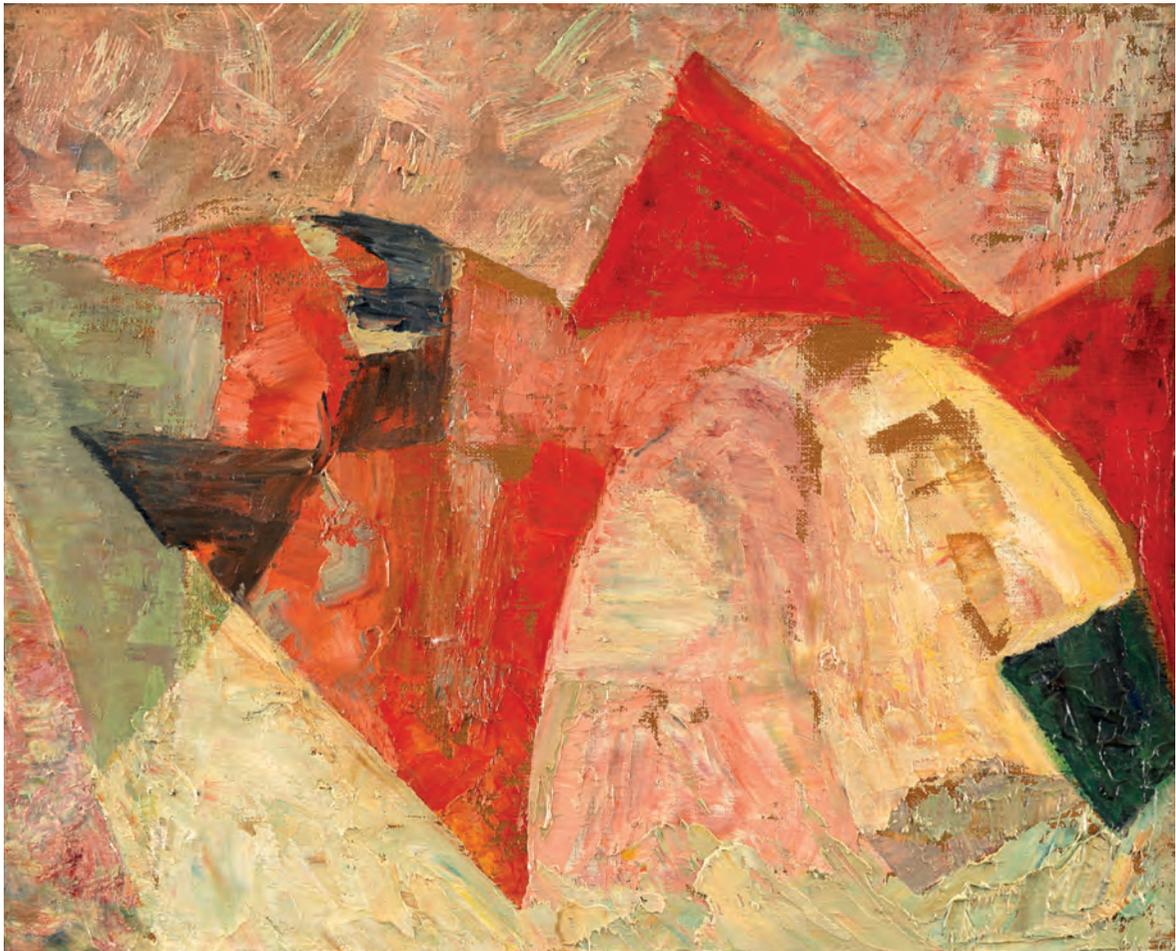


32. **Elévation** 1956 - 1957

Oil on canvas  
40.5 x 33 cm

Signed and dated lower right  
Inscribed verso

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 260



33. **Carrières** 1957 - 1958

Oil on canvas  
33 x 41 cm

Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1002



**34. Mouvement** 1959

Oil on canvas  
81 x 100 cm

Signed and dated verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 414



35. **Evasion** 1960

Oil on canvas  
100 x 73 cm

Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 503

**36. Magique Sonia** c.1958

Oil on canvas  
195 x 130 cm

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 765  
EXHIBITED: 1972, Galerie Massol, Paris.

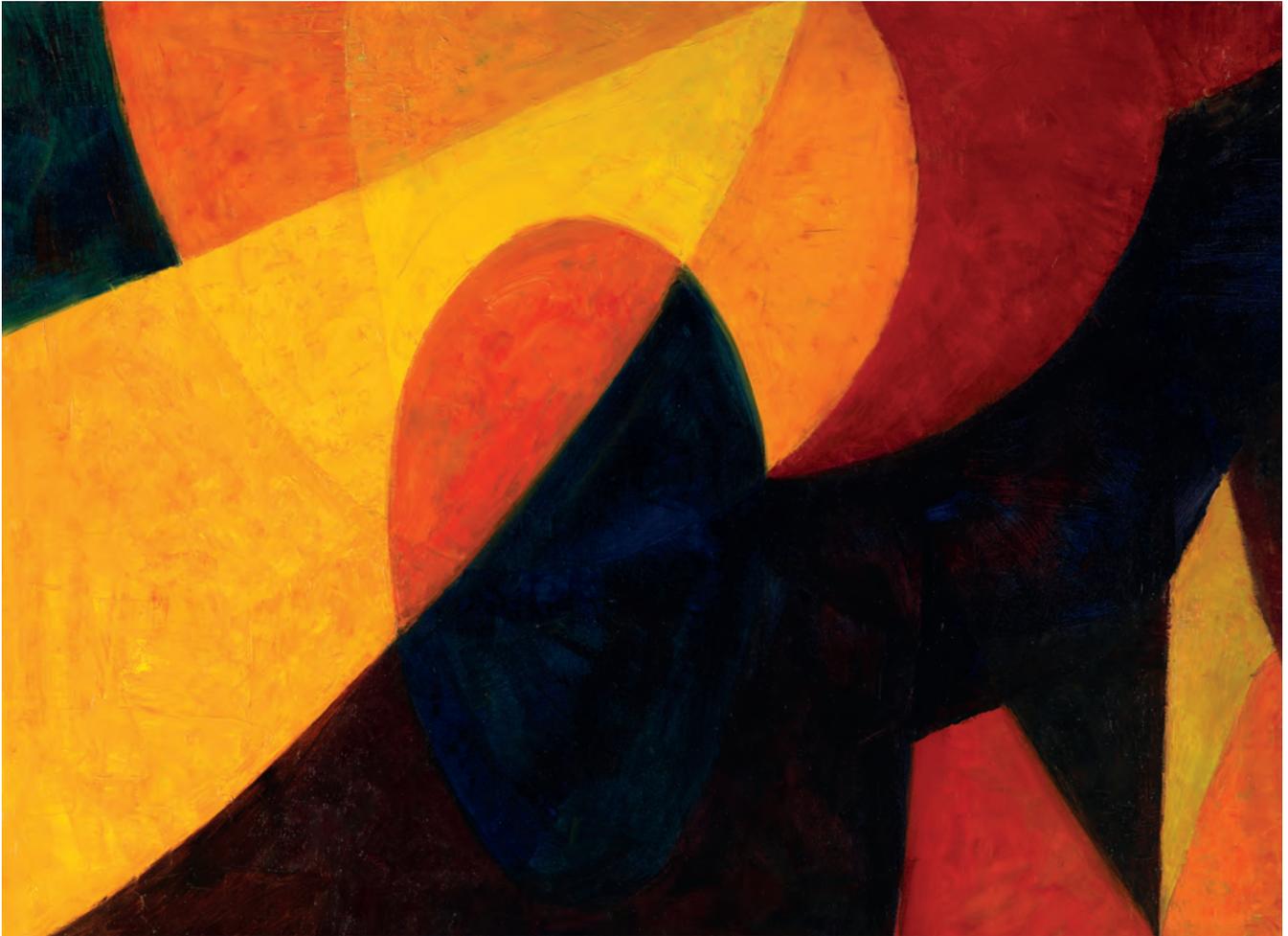




**37. Composition** 1960

Oil on canvas  
45.5 x 55 cm

Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1249



**38. Lumière** 1965

Oil on canvas  
73 x 100 cm

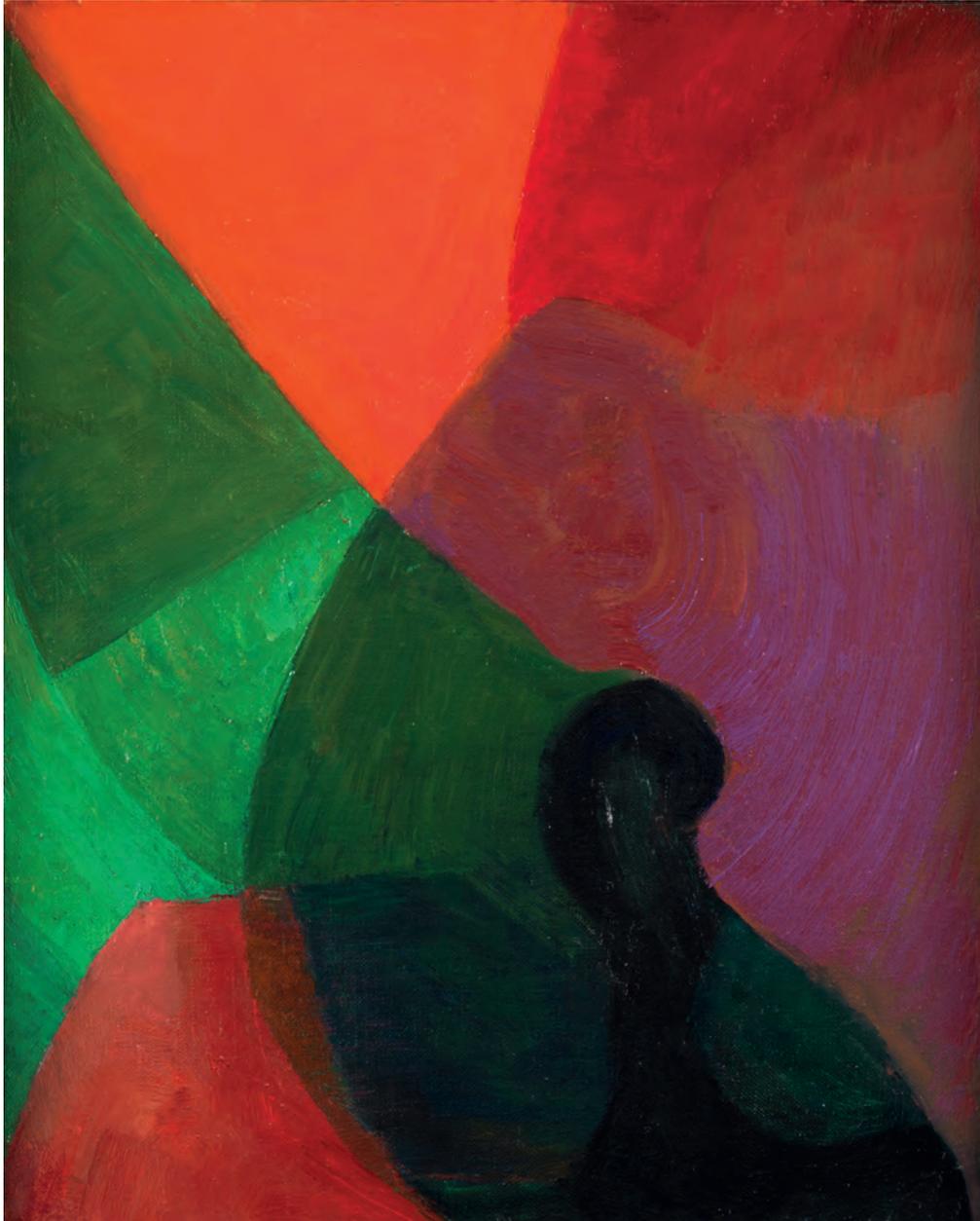
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 104



**39. Mouvement** c.1965

Oil on canvas  
73 x 100 cm

Signed lower left  
Signed and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 501



**40. Mouvement** c.1965

Oil on canvas  
40.5 x 32.5 cm

Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 1025



41. **Méditation** 1968

Oil on canvas  
92 x 73 cm

Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 554

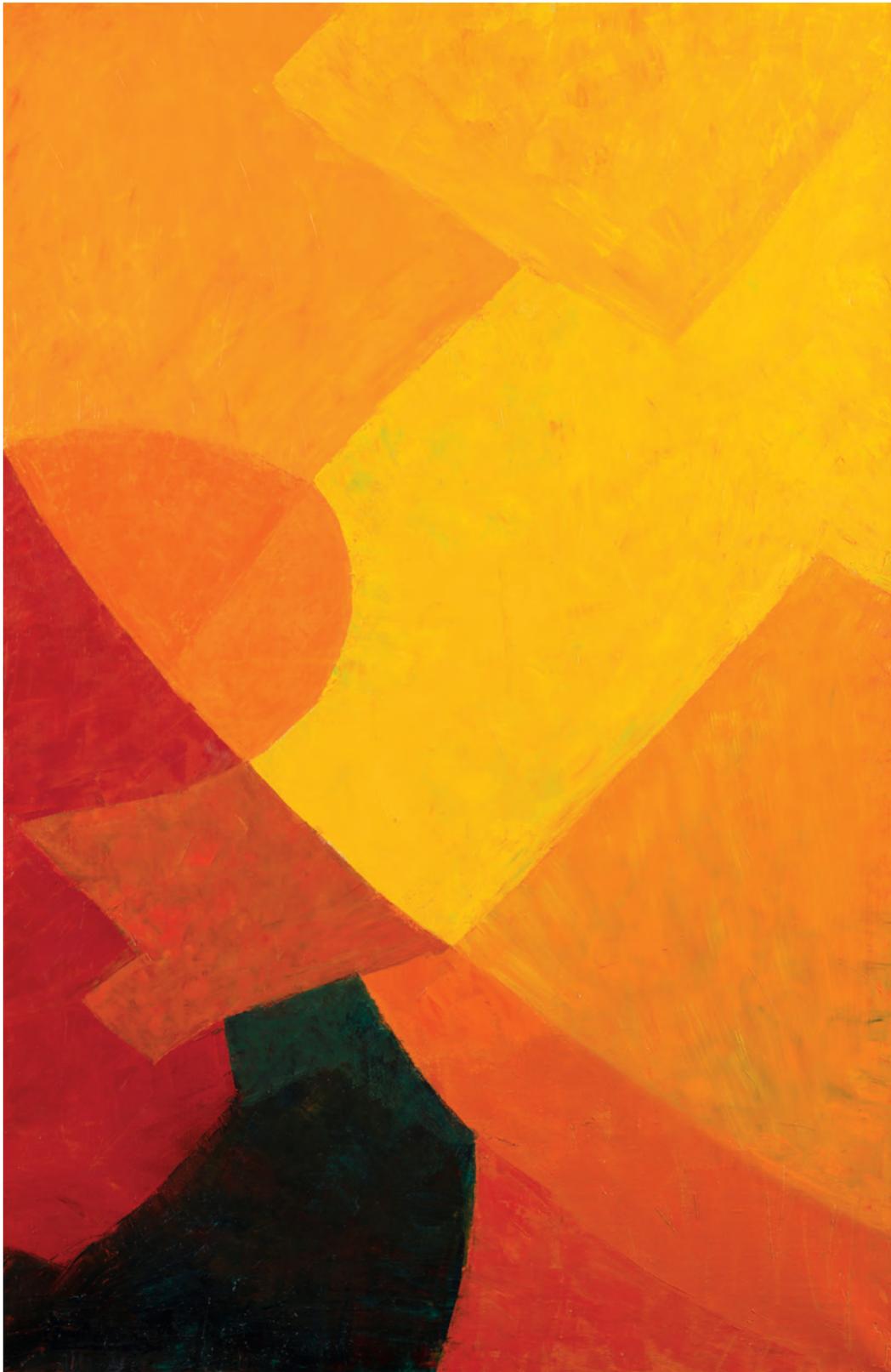
EXHIBITED: 1972, *Maîtres du Nord et des Flandres*, centre  
artistique Bondues-Marcq, Marcq-en- Baroeul, France.



**42. Création** 1960 - 1970

Oil on canvas  
54 x 73 cm

Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 633



**43. Espace** 1972

Oil on canvas  
100 x 65 cm

Signed lower left  
Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 7



44. **Vérité** 1973

Oil on canvas  
66 x 81.5 cm

Signed, dated and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 942

EXHIBITED: 1989, *Lacasse*, Maison de la Culture, Tournai, Belgium.



45. **Quadrichromie** 1974

Oil on canvas  
73.5 x 100.5 cm

Signed, dated, titled and inscribed verso  
Lacasse Estate Inventory Dia no. 15

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1914 Galerie de la Reine, Brussels.  
1919 Galerie Lupsin, Brussels.  
1919 Cercle Artistique de Tournai, Tournai.  
1920 Galerie Lupsin, Brussels.  
1922 Galerie Lupsin, Brussels.  
1924 Cercle Artistique de Tournai, Tournai.  
1926 Cercle Artistique de Tournai, Tournai ('Oeuvres du Peintre du Pays Blanc').  
1928 Galerie Dujardin, Roubaix; Galerie du couvent des Franciscains, Mons-en-Baroeul.  
1929 Salons de la marquise de Roys, Paris.  
1930 Salons de la marquise de Roys, Paris.  
1933 Galerie des Ingénieurs, Paris.  
1937 Galerie de l'Equipe, Paris.  
1938 Galerie de l'Equipe, Paris.  
1946 Galerie Delpierre, Paris.  
1951 Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris; Wildenstein, Paris; Galerie Dina Vierny, Paris (works 1935-1936).  
1953 Kustverein, Salzburg; Kunstverein and Landesmuseum Darmstadt (travelling exhibition with works 1935-1952).  
1955 Galerie Rose Fried, New York (works 1949-1954).  
1956 Kunstverein, Freiburg-im-Breisgau; Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld; Kunstverein and Landesmuseum Darmstadt; Kunstverein and Museum Heidelberg (travelling retrospective exhibition).  
1957 Städtische Akademie, Darmstadt; Kurpfälzisches Museum, Heidelberg.  
1958 Galerie Grattaciolo, Milan.  
1959 Galerie Jacques Massol, Paris; Drian Galleries, London.  
1960 Galerie de la Madeleine, Brussels; Drian Galleries, London (retrospective exhibition).  
1961 Galerie Jacques Massol, Paris (recent works); Galerie Kare-Berntsen, Oslo.  
1962 Drian Galleries, London (Cubist works 1910-1915); Galerie Heberg, Copenhagen.  
1967 Swedish Architecture Museum, Lund; Paris, Galerie Jacques Massol.  
1968 Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège and Musée des Beaux-Arts, Mons (retrospective exhibition).  
1969 Galerie Jacques Massol, Paris (works 1909-1914); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi; Kunstverein, Feirburg-im Breisgau; Landesmuseum Oldenburg; Kunstverein, Kassel (travelling exhibition).  
1970 Baukunst Galerie, Cologne (retrospective exhibition); Halle aux Draps, Tournai (retrospective exhibition); Galerie Jacques Massol, Paris (works 1916-1927).  
1971 Galerie Jacques Massol, Paris (works 1928-1939); Drian Galleries, London (retrospective exhibition).  
1972 Galerie Jacques Massol, Paris (recent works).  
1973 Playhouse Gallery, Harlow; Drian Galleries, London; Galerie Jeanne Buytaert, Antwerp (works 1909-1913).  
1974 Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas, Tournai. (inauguration of eight large murals); World Trade Centre, Brussels (retrospective exhibition at the occasion of publication of the book Joseph Lacasse par lui-même.); Maison de la Culture, Tournai.  
1975 Galerie Govaerts, Brussels (works 1909-1974).  
1976 Fondation Septentrion (Anne et Albert Prouvost), Marcq-en-Baroeul.  
1977 Musée d'Histoire et d'Art, Luxembourg (retrospective exhibition).  
1978 Modern Religious Art Museum, Ostend.  
1984 Drian Galleries, London.  
1988 Galerie Callu Mérite, Paris (abstract works 1911-1956).  
1989 Maison de la Culture, Tournai (Degand, Lacasse, Leroy); Cotthem Gallery, Aalst, Lineart Ghent; Galerie Callu Mérite, Paris (abstract works 1930-1940).  
1990 Galerie Cotthem, Art London 90, London.  
1991 Galerie Callu Mérite, Paris (20 collages 1930-1960).  
1994 Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain de la ville de Liège, Liège (retrospective exhibition); Galerie Cotthem, Knokke-Zoute, (Cubist works 1910-1915).  
1995 Couvent des Cordeliers, Paris (retrospective exhibition); Galerie Callu Mérite, Paris, (works 1930-1950).  
1996 Fondation Bemberg, Toulouse (retrospective exhibition).  
1999 Cotthem Gallery, Knokke-Zoute and Barcelona, (retrospective exhibition).  
2013 Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tournai, Tournai. (La Beauté sauve le monde, including a presentation of Lacasse's 'Quatre Jours de la Création'); Whitford Fine Art, London (retrospective exhibition).  
2015 Whitford Fine Art, London.

## MUSEUMS

- Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tournai  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège  
Musée d'Histoire et d'Art, Luxembourg  
Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris  
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes  
National museet, Stockholm  
Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel  
Eilat Museum, Israel  
Museum of Art, Ein Harod, Israel  
Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh  
National Museum, Djakarta  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

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Exhibition coordination: Gabriel Toso, Whitford Fine Art, London.

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We also wish to express a post-mortem thanks to Willy Van den Bussche whose unwavering support of our research into the pioneering role of Joseph Lacasse was a great source of inspiration.



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