

Mario Doucette – Histoires

When Mario was little, he may have never said: "When I grow up, I will be an artist". However, in spite of himself, he did become an artist, but he has refused to "grow up". Looking at Doucette's paintings, one is transported to a time in childhood when creating an imagined scene on paper was an accomplishment full of pleasure. It is easy to imagine the mindset of a child, like that of an artist, lost in a daydream, drawing each stone and strand of grass as minutely as the soldiers and the explosions. It is a world where innocence transcends violence and drama, retaining only the excitement and romanticism of armed combat. Contrary to this visual technique, the content of the images is far from naïve and innocent.

The scenarios presented in this work suggest moments in history as the artist would like them to be remembered. As we know, history is often written by those who have been advantaged by notable events. The point of view is almost always that of the winner, the coloniser, the conqueror. Doucette overturns the situation by reinterpreting moments of "real" history and imagining alternatives. In a constant play between reality and imagination, his paintings are strewn with anecdotal elements, either little known or forgotten, that the artist has discovered while researching historical documents. Very much a product of his time and loyal to his cultural heritage, Doucette also incorporates heroes taken from American popular culture into scenes from the Acadian deportation.

Fixed moments in Doucette's paintings evoke a before and after narrative that can be amusing to imagine: What if Europe had been considered the "New World"? What if the aboriginals had converted the Christians? Would English soldiers really curl between two raids?

Doucette's work provokes a rethinking of our perception of written (*History*), as well as our notion of "hero" and how they are both inscribed in a collective heritage.

Nisk Imbeault has been the director of la Galerie Sans Nom, artist-run centre, since 2001.