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“Abstraction is a Heart to Heart”

By Florence Millioud-Henriques

Contemporary art figure Fabienne Verdier unveils her musical explorations at Galerie Alice Pauli in Lausanne

Forget everything. Knowledge, certainties. Forget everything, leap in and start over... A believer in the artistic free-fall, Fabienne Verdier likes to live on the edge, finding the abyss invigorating. At 22, disenchanted, she left France for an initiatory journey in China. The discipline of calligraphy and spiritual infiltrations into art would keep her there ten years. By 47, a figure in abstract art, she travelled back in art history to probe the breath of the Flemish Golden Age. At 53, she reveals her research into uncharted inner life and vibrations at Galerie Alice Pauli in Lausanne. And once more, hers is an immersion into the sublime of the unknown.

“Getting to know oneself”, she reveals, “entails venturing into polyphony. Until recently, I had a very minimal aesthetic vision. For me, a brushstroke could express all forms, but then I began to listen to voices intermingling, allowing the energies to burst forth in canon.” Tonic chords, chanted gestures, singing reliefs... new vocabulary dots the painter’s speech, and in its wake the exaltation of a pictorial renaissance experienced with and through music. “In the fall of 2014, I was invited by the Juilliard School in New York to be an artist in residence, the idea being to shake up the established order in the visual art and musical universes. The result touched me very deeply, I wept every day,” she confided. “I painted, the musicians composed, but we did not translate our languages, we did not superpose them, we intuitively let a meta-language emerge.”

To reveal this sensitive essence, Fabienne Verdier’s large formats exhibited in Lausanne present several forms of transparency, several layers of meaning. They are more tactile, more visceral, more symphonic. Her red, blue or green *Walking Paintings* punctuated by curves and intense black strokes together form a magnetizing whole, calling out, undulating, oscillating. A variable of sensory compositions, the work speaks absent any need for words. “Abstraction is a heart-to-heart

between the artist and the viewer. It must be capable of suggestion, of eliciting a reminiscence out of nothing. Abstraction is the act of engaging in poetic conversation. Setting out to make art, though, is a bad start! It’s a pity that ‘abstraction’ has been so misused, since a spiritual exchange is the most beautiful thing there is. But an enormous amount of work has to go into its preparation: so that the painting can speak for itself.”

In her custom-built studio where she paints vertically with a brush weighing up to 60 kilograms guided by a pair of bicycle handlebars, Fabienne Verdier imposes her cadence: the razor’s edge. And her method: an almost monastic pace to her work that can last several years. “One day, I met Alice Pauli. She told me: ‘Lock yourself away, let me take care of everything.’ She kept her word, she introduced my work into some of the greatest collections [Editor’s note: including the prestigious Hubert Looser Foundation housed at the Zurich Kunsthhaus], and I kept mine. Without Alice, I would not be here today.”

Here, where “few painters have dared to go,” noted Daniel Abadie, former curator of the Centre Pompidou in Paris and curator of the Lausanne show. “From the very start, all of Verdier’s work has been based upon visual memory. Here, with her research into musical phenomena, she is delving into music for the possibility to visualize something that is not concrete. She has gone much deeper into abstract thinking while, at the same time, maintaining a link with reality.”

**Lausanne, Galerie Alice Pauli,
through 25 July, Tues-Sat.
Info: 021 312 87 62
www.galeriealicepauli.ch**