

WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Press Release

Fabienne Verdier *Rhythms and Reflections*

25 November 2016 – 4 February 2017



This November, Waddington Custot is proud to present Fabienne Verdier's (b. 1962, Paris) first solo exhibition in London. The exhibition will feature large-scale abstract paintings produced over the last year. These include recent work from the Walking Paintings series as well as a new group of paintings, *Rhythms and Reflections*, which mark a noteworthy change of direction for the artist.

As a painter known for combining an Eastern artistic education with the tradition of Western art, Verdier's work is characterised by bold gestural compositions relying on a number of techniques developed over the past thirty years. In an intensely physical process, Verdier uses painting tools of her own invention, large-scale, custom-made brushes, funnels and other implements suspended from her studio ceiling. This vertical painting technique allows Verdier's mark making to be a product of the body moving freely, not restricted by the weight of the brush, playing with gravity. The paintings combine the influence of Action painting with more meditative, theoretical concepts of unity, spontaneity, asceticism and other aspects of an Eastern trajectory of art history.

Verdier's physical and performative creative practice has undergone an evolution in recent years that can be seen most vividly in the *Rhythms and Reflections* series. These paintings were made following Verdier's return to France from a period of intense experimentation spent as the first visual artist-in-residence at The Juilliard School in New York in 2014. The creation of both music and painting simultaneously, awakened in Verdier a profound awareness of vibration and the rhythm of melodic phrases.

In the *Rhythms and Reflections* works, Verdier balances her on-going exploration of gesture with a consideration of the pictorial surface as a whole and consequently the creation of a sense of space and depth. Multiple layers of glaze are initially built up, adding a translucency and vibrancy to the surface of each canvas. Definition is given to an abstract plane of broad monochromatic brushstrokes through a series of vertical drips of paint that Verdier resolutely incorporates into the composition. A departure from her

previous practice, the new works on the whole are less about the physical act of painting and more about the consideration of a rhythmic layering, nomadism and sudden events of mark making. As Verdier herself considers,

“Everything in this world is vibration: forces in constant movement, combinations of rhythms and reflections of the real. We ourselves are rhythms steeped in the great universal rhythm. As the Mexican poet Octavio Paz once said: ‘Rhythm is not a tempo: it is a vision of the world.’”



If this new series offers Reflections, the Walking Paintings are composed as a ‘lightning strike’. The series is a result of a performative act: a funnel of paint, suspended from the ceiling, pulled across the canvas in a swift horizontal movement. Begun in 2012, the series has gone through several stages of development and is the continuation of the artist’s exploration of the idea of the ‘trait’ (a line drawn, in French). As the paint falls, the raw energy of the artist walking on the painting is translated onto the canvas, making nature’s intangible forces tangible.

Verdier’s paintings feature in several private and public collections including the Centre Pompidou, Cernuschi Museum, Pinakotek der Moderne and Foundations Hubert Looser, François Pinault and Palazzo Torlonia. Recent projects include conceptual collaboration with architect Jean Nouvel for the National Art Museum of China in Beijing and exhibitions and installations in Singapore, Hong Kong, Paris, Vienna, Rome, Lausanne, Zurich and Brussels, among other cities.

NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT FABIENNE VERDIER

Born in Paris in 1962, abstract painter Verdier studied at the École des Beaux-Arts of Toulouse before travelling to China, in 1983, to study the art of spontaneous painting and other Eastern artistic traditions at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing. There she met, and was taught by, some of the most significant Chinese painters who survived the Cultural Revolution. Verdier’s work explores the dynamism of forces in nature, fluid movement and instability. Her gestural abstraction in expansive, multi-panelled works intersects with the vertical act of painting, which is said to join heaven and earth. While she maintains the custom of meditation before making a mark, her intimate knowledge of techniques and traditions of both Western and Eastern art is taking her into new territories.

The product of her time as visual artist-in-residence at The Juilliard School in 2014, this year will see the launch of ‘The Juilliard Experiment’, a documentary film by Mark Kidel who followed Verdier’s journey with

students and faculty, initiating live studio experiments and creating work guided by the question: “Can painting and music, in the moment of creation, be ‘played’ simultaneously?”

Verdier has been widely exhibited internationally. This year, she is also participating in a group exhibition at the Museum Folkwang, Essen, beside works by Rodin, Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline. In 2014 she was invited to create an installation of seven works for Köningsklasse II, organized by the Pinakotek der Moderne of Munich and later acquired by the museum, and participated in Formes Simples at Centre Pompidou-Metz in France. In 2013 the Groeninge Museum in Bruges, Belgium, held an important solo exhibition of Verdier's work in conversation with Flemish Primitives such as Van Eyck and Memling. In 2012, the Hubert Looser Foundation of Zurich, having previously commissioned several works, selected Verdier for a group exhibition with Donald Judd, John Chamberlain, Ellsworth Kelly and Cy Twombly in Vienna's Kunstforum and in 2011, her work was included in a notable group exhibition The Art of Deceleration, Motion and Rest in Art from Caspar David Friedrich to Ai Weiwei at the Kunstmuseum in Wolfsburg, Germany.

“Verdier’s work has a way of renouncing self expression or any kind of personal lyricism that allows her to show that the human experience exists within a range of intellectual and spiritual forces of which it is only the expression (...) it is as if there were energies that play a role in the transformation of the material world. (...) I would say that Fabienne Verdier’s brush embodies the forces of the world”.

Jean de Loisy, Curator of Formes Simples, Centre Pompidou-Metz, 2014

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Title: Fabienne Verdier: Rhythms and Reflections
Address: Waddington Custot, 11 Cork Street, London W1S 3LT
Dates: 25 November 2016 – 4 February 2017
Private View: Thursday 24 November, 6–8pm
Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm,
Saturday: 10am to 4pm
Admission: Free
Travel: Piccadilly, Green Park or Bond Street Tube Station

IMAGES

1. Fabienne Verdier, Impermanence I, 2016, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 226 x 150 cm

2. Fabienne Verdier, Impermanence II, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 226 x 150 cm

3. Fabienne Verdier at work on the Walking Paintings series

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