

Room 4 – Intuition of a soundscape (2014-2017)

After 4 years of silence in contact with Flemish primitives, Fabienne Verdier left her large studio isolated in the countryside to work at a music school—the Juilliard School (2014). She set up a laboratory in a confined space where there were sometimes up to six people—with their drums, cello, piano, saxophone, camera, paintbrush or guitar—to interpret a double harmony of painting and music together. Along with her brushes, Fabienne Verdier also started using a camera. In real time, while she was drawing or painting, a camera recorded images presented simultaneously on a screen. These films are not documentaries, but rather “pictorial capsules”. Back in Europe, the Director of the Festival d'Art Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence suggested that she should pursue the experiments she had carried out in the New York laboratory (2017). Her research was presented in an immersive installation at the Zola Gallery of the Cité du Livre in Aix. In 2011, in a longstanding quest for greater mobility, the artist took a long trip through the fjords and turned the boat into a mobile studio to draw the landscape in uninterrupted movement. She invented a new tool that looked like a piping bag: a plastic neck filled with an acrylic material that she used to get rid of brushes and walk on the canvass while projecting the pictorial material directly on the stretcher: *Walking/Paintings*.

Suite provençale 2 – a tribute to Darius Milhaud (detail), 2015, acrylic and mixed technique on canvas, 180 x 272 cm. Priv. coll., USA, Courtesy galerie Lelong & Co, Paris © ADAGP Paris 2019

Room 5 – Vide – Vibration (2013-2017)

Physicists and cosmologists assert that only 5% of the universe's total mass is visible. Fabienne Verdier had tried to capture the nature of the void in working with the architect Jean-Paul Viguier in his Majunga Tower at La Défense in 2013. In the entrance there, between the 4 pillars holding up the tower's 97.000 metric tons, she painted a twelve-metre-high work for which she had built a machine capable of producing lines that are more than one metre wide. Pursuing her reflections in 2015, she withdrew to a mountain hermitage with Trinh Xuan Thuan to compare their points of view on the nature of the void. He taught her that the sun's light is white and we would see everything as white if it was never stopped by a body. After that, the artist thought about a piece that would work toward a purification of colour, one that would return to the purity of its source. A painting that could express light before its collision with dust particles. In 2016, she produced a first painting that she showed as part of her project on *L'Expérience du langage*, and in the commemorative edition of the *Le Petit Robert* dictionary, before creating this set of paintings, *Void–Vibration* in 2017.

Vide – Vibration n° 4 (detail), 2017, acrylic and mixed technique on canvas, 183 x 407 cm. Priv. coll. © ADAGP Paris 2019

Room 6 – Spirit of the Mountain (2017-2019)

Studios and mountains are two major themes in Fabienne Verdier's work. The artist set up her nomadic studio, a metal structure capable of holding the weight of her large brush, in five places: on the Bibémus Plateau, at Bimont Dam to capture the triangular view of the mountain, at Saint-Antonin to view the 22-km-long rocky face, the Sainte-Victoire Priory at the mountain's summit acing the Brèche des Moines, and in the Bibémus Quarry. According to neuroscientist Alain Berthoz, the perception of movement is a simulated action for our brain. The perception of walking simulates walking. These paintings are a memory of climbing the Venturiers trail and the violent interplay of the elements. Some works even bear the “stigmata” of the wind, rain and hail that jostled the brush and contradicted the movement of the pictorial flow. The artist perceives the world from the angle of the energy found in each atom of matter. Her mission of surveying the mountain leads to a geomorphological vision. Mont Sainte-Victoire can be seen with its folds and its slow genesis.

Montagne Sainte-Victoire (detail), 2018, acrylic and mixed technique on canvas, 178 x 240 cm. Priv. coll. © ADAGP Paris 2019

Fabienne Verdier
*sur les terres
de Cézanne*

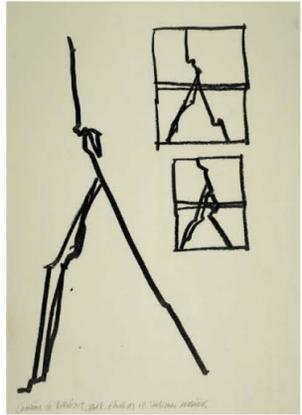
Three exhibitions
Bruno Ely, curator in chief,
director of Musée Granet

Curatorship
Musée Granet, “Rétrospective”
Bruno Ely, director of the museum,
with the participation of Alexandre
Vanautgaerden, Royal Academy of Belgium.

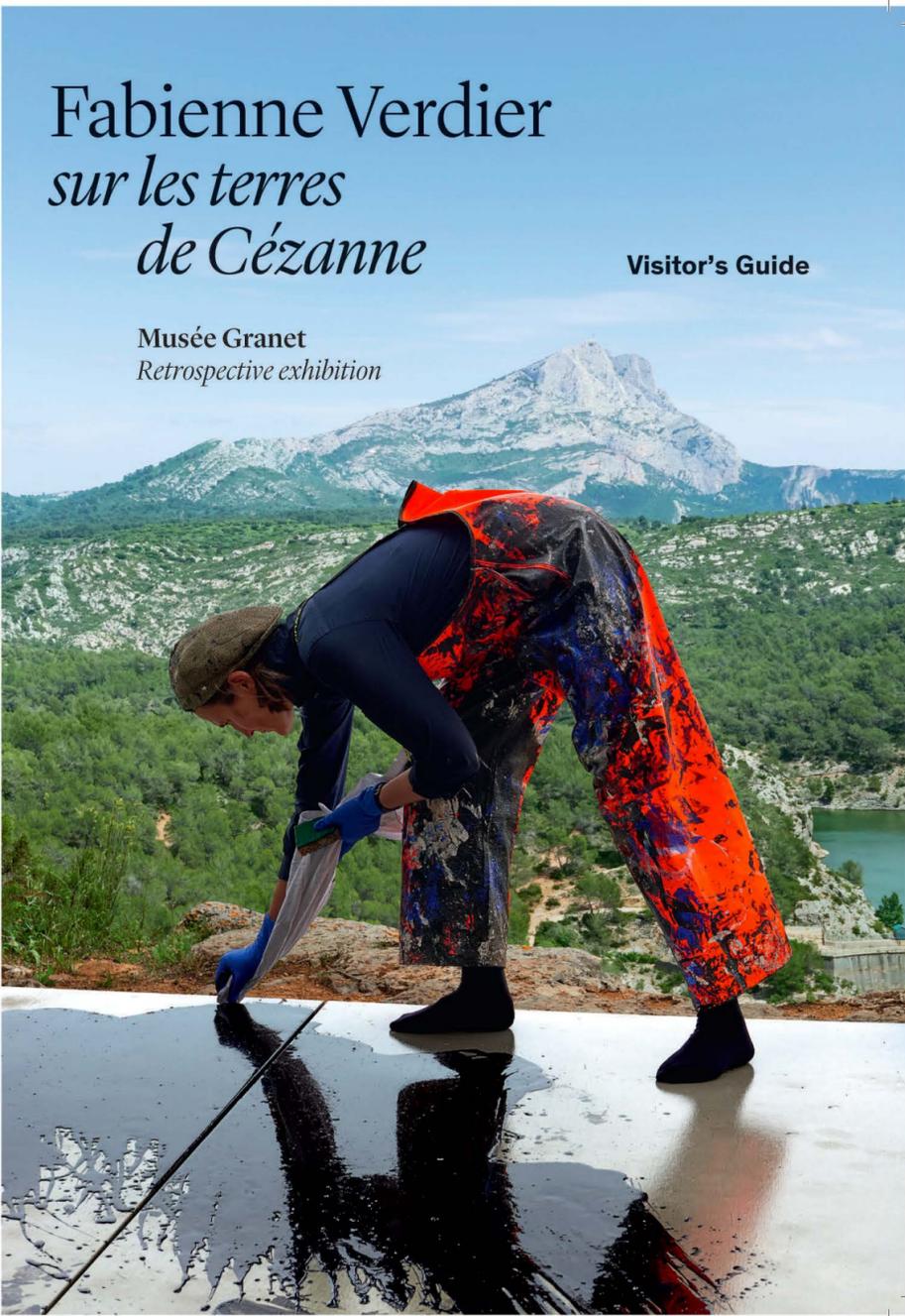
Musée du Pavillon de Vendôme, “Atelier nomade”
Christel Roy, director of the museum and
Alexandre Vanautgaerden, Associate Curator.

Cité du livre, galerie Zola,
“Sound Traces, installation”.

Cover photo: Thierry Cron, 2018
Graphic design: Studio we-we



Carrière de Bibémus, étude n°18, 2018, oil pastel on tinted Arches vellum 47 x 33 cm. Priv. coll. © ADAGP Paris 2019



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*sur les terres
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Visitor's Guide

Musée Granet
Retrospective exhibition



Fabienne Verdier — Rétrospective

This exhibition presents the work of a surveyor who draws original maps: maps of the energy flows that crisscross our universe, our brains and our language, and shape the landscapes around us. From France to China, via New York, the fjords of Norway and the Saint Lawrence River in Quebec, Fabienne Verdier has travelled the planet to capture the world's spontaneous dimension. When she was twenty, she observed a flock of birds in flight in Toulouse, then left for Asia for nearly ten years (1983) to understand the movement that animates them with the last masters of traditional painting. Fabienne Verdier had to leave China following the events at Tiananmen Square, but she went back. She came down with a serious illness and returned to Europe at the age of 30 and, for fifteen years, she withdrew and imagined a new way of painting. In 2006, the artist designed a monumental brush and built a studio around it. She became a body-brush. The artist worked with scientists (astrophysicist, linguist and neuroscientist) and musicians to grasp the forces that give birth to shapes. She began this musical experiment in America in 2014, and continued in Aix-en-Provence with four string quartets. The Director of the Musée Granet then suggested that she come and work on this motif. The artist built a nomadic studio to cope with the wind, sun, rain and hail: *Sur les Terres de Cézanne*.

Photo: Philippe Chancel, 2018

Room 1 — The formative years in China (1983-1992)

Fabienne Verdier left in 1983 for Chongqing, a town in Sichuan province at the foot of Tibet. Fabienne Verdier first struggled at the Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing, capital of Sichuan Province, at the foot of Tibet, where the official art was mandatory, and finally met an old painter, Huang Yuan. Despite the official prohibitions, he accepted to teach her the fundamentals of his art. She studied classic works and the use of Chinese brushes, whose structure lets you paint in one stroke thanks to their internal reservoir. The artist gave up painting with an easel and learnt to paint standing up. Gravity became a player in her painting. At the same time, she undertook several study trips to discover cultures and traditions in Guizhou Province, with the Miao and Yi peoples. She drew, listened to the songs of the boatmen on the Yangzi, and gathered together a large amount of materials. In 1989, her student works were exhibited at the Palace of Fine Arts in Chongqing. Her book *Passenger of silence* (2003) recounts this formative period.

Cobalt meditations (detail), 1997, cobalt ink and cinnabar on silk canvas, 180 x 260 cm. Musée Cernuschi, Paris. © ADAGP Paris 2019

Room 2 — Deconstructing signs (1992-2007)

When she returned to France for good, Fabienne Verdier undertook the slow work of ideogram deconstruction. She realised the power that lies in the "single stroke of the brush", and transposed her research into the complex forms of Chinese writing onto the study of forms in nature. The artist developed spontaneous writing close to the constantly evolving forms that she observed in her garden. Fabienne Verdier abandoned her Chinese tools during this period and, in 2003, created a monumental brush, the size of her body. Her new studio (half-factory, half-chapel) was organised around a pit in which the artist used a set of pulleys to work the brush made of more than twenty horsetails and which could contain nearly 60 litres of pictorial material. In 2005, she created a series of paintings with a new dynamism and energy after meditating on the works of American abstract expressionist painters at the Hubert Looser Foundation in Zurich. She then began creating a sharp contrast between the background of these paintings and the form that juts out over them. Painting the backgrounds could sometimes take weeks of work. Then, in a silent dance while walking on the canvass laid out on the ground, the artist repeated the brushstrokes to be produced, before painting the form in a few seconds, which felt like an eternity to her.

Ternaire (detail), 2007, acrylic and mixed technique on canvas, 168 x 212 cm. Priv. coll. © ADAGP Paris 2019

Room 3 — Flemish Masters (2009-2013)

For four years, Fabienne Verdier's work was based on 15th-century Flemish painting. Brush in hand, she had a dialogue with these painters who have been dead for 500 years. She observed their grace and proposed a new reading of the masterpieces by Memling, Van Eyck and Van der Goes. Each painting in this section is part of a specific series of drawings and many paintings. Furthermore, Fabienne Verdier gathered notes and collected all sorts of pictures (works of art, representations of nature, scientific images) that she put together in notebooks that went with the paintings she made. She reflected the paintings by the Flemish Masters as well as their contemporary thinkers and mystics from the late Middle Ages. Fabienne Verdier steeped herself in that which is hidden under the "subject" of Flemish paintings: labyrinthine forms, primordial and geometric forms that create movement—life—under the apparent immobility. Seeking to gain more freedom in handling her brush, the artist sawed the handle off her brush and replaced it with bicycle handlebars. This newfound freedom let her move around easily in all three dimensions. For the first time she replaced black with white and red pictorial materials.

Margareta I. Labyrinthine Thoughts. After Portrait of Margareta van Eyck by Jan van Eyck (1436) (detail), 2011, acrylic and mixed technique on canvas, 180 x 403 cm. Priv. coll. © ADAGP Paris 2019



Musée Granet
Place Saint-Jean-de-Malte
13100 Aix-en-Provence

Practical informations

June 21 – October 13, 2019

Access for people with reduced mobility:
18, rue Roux-Alphéran
museegranet-aixenprovence.fr
Tel. : 04 42 52 88 32

Open every day except Monday
from 10 a.m. to 19 p.m.
Closed on Mondays.

This exhibition continues in two other locations:
Cité du Livre, galerie Zola ("*Sound Traces*, installation") and musée du Pavillon de Vendôme ("*Atelier nomade*").

This exhibition has received the generous support of the following galleries:
Alice Pauli, Patrick Derom, Lelong & Co., Waddington Custot, as well as the Association des Amis du musée Granet

Catalogue

Fabienne Verdier, sur les terres de Cézanne, dir. Alexandre Vanautgaerden, 5 Continents Editions, Milan, 34 x 19,5 cm, 184 p., 29 €.