

WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Press Release

Fabienne Verdier: *The Vortex Paintings*

15 May – 27 June 2020



Waddington Custot is pleased to present *The Vortex Paintings*, a remarkable new series by the celebrated contemporary abstract painter, Fabienne Verdier.

Through her work, Verdier gives physical form to the usually invisible and intangible forces within nature, incorporating a wide range of natural phenomena, from gravity and kinetic energy to sound waves and vibrations. In these large-scale paintings, seen for the first time at Waddington Custot, Verdier continues her exploration into the painting of sounds and music, in particular the visual representation of breathing techniques employed by sopranos performing Mozart's arias. *The Vortex Paintings* are characterised by a single large, whirling helix, which dominates the composition and echoes the ascendant scaling sound of an aria.

Verdier initiated *The Vortex Paintings* during her time as the first artist-in-residence at New York's prestigious performing arts school, the Juilliard School. There, working on a smaller scale and in pen, Verdier captured in visual form the practice sessions and breathing techniques of prominent singers and musicians. She began to visualise the voices singing arias as columns of breath rising in the air, with each different piece of music engendering a unique vortex form.

Typically for Verdier's work, the form on canvas is created with giant brushes and tools of her own invention, which are suspended from her studio ceiling. For this new series, the artist has adapted her studio environment to incorporate a mobile platform. This enables her to stand directly above the painting, which is laid on the ground, and to paint new, fluid expressions from the centre of the canvas.

In *The Vortex Paintings*, Verdier captures melodies and rhythms of individual arias through ascending curves, undulations, and frequencies that she detects whilst listening to the music. The resultant paintings

have a sense of weightlessness, reflecting the lightness of emotion and the ‘lifting’ sensation experienced when listening to voices singing an aria.

As Fabienne Verdier describes:

“This series represents the energy of man and nature brought together in what becomes a state of total immersion. There is the dissolution of self into sound, into the environment, into the atmosphere. In my work I try to capture the invisible voice over soundwaves, to visualize energy and those things we feel but do not see”.

The Vortex Paintings represent Verdier’s first new body of work following her major retrospective in France, held across three institutions including the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence. These new works reveal the evolution, depth and variety of Verdier’s practice, encompassing explorations into sound and geology within wide-ranging natural phenomena.

Fabienne Verdier: *The Vortex Paintings* coincides with a solo presentation of further examples of Verdier’s work from this series at Frieze New York (6–10 May 2020) on the Waddington Custot booth.

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Fabienne Verdier

Fabienne Verdier (b. 1962, Paris, France) is an abstract painter who explores the dynamism of forces in nature, movement and immobility by drawing on her intimate knowledge of techniques and traditions of both Western and Eastern art. Verdier paints vertically in ink, standing directly on her stretchers, using giant brushes and tools of her own invention suspended from the studio ceiling. Her work combines Eastern aspects of unity, spontaneity and asceticism with the line, action and expression of Western painting.

As a young art school graduate, Verdier left France for China in 1985 to study the art of spontaneous painting and other Eastern traditions with some of the last great Chinese painters who survived the Cultural Revolution. Her adventure and immersion as an apprentice painter would last nearly ten years, recounted in her 2003 book, ‘Passagère du Silence’.

Verdier’s work has been exhibited extensively in Beijing, Singapore, Taipei, Paris, Rome, Lausanne, Zurich and Brussels, among other cities. In 2011, she was included in an important group exhibition *The Art of Deceleration*, from Caspar David Friedrich to Ai Wei Wei at the Kunstmuseum in Wolfsburg, Germany. 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. 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 2014, she was invited to create an installation of seven works for *Köningsklasse II*, organized by the Pinakotek der Moderne of Munich, and participated in *Formes Simples* at Centre Pompidou-Metz in France. In addition to her current painterly research into possible links between music and painting, recent projects include Verdier’s conceptual collaboration with architect Jean Nouvel for the National Art Museum of China project in Beijing. In 2016, seven of Verdier’s works were acquired by Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. Verdier was been invited to compose a visual partita for the 2017 edition of the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence, and won the commission to design the Roland Garros French Open official poster. In 2018, the artist set up a nomadic studio on Sainte-Victoire Mountain, renowned for its presence in several paintings by Paul Cézanne. The series was exhibited alongside the works of Cézanne at Verdier’s retrospective exhibition at Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence, 2019. Fabienne Verdier lives and works in France and Canada.

Image

Fabienne Verdier, *Vortex*, 2020, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 72 x 53 1/8 in, 183 x 135 cm. Courtesy the artist and Waddington Custot

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Exhibition: Fabienne Verdier: *The Vortex Paintings*
Address: Waddington Custot, 11 Cork Street, London W1S 3LT
Dates: 29 April - 27 June 2020
Opening Times: Monday to Friday, 10am–6pm; Saturday: 11am–6pm
Admission: Free
Travel: Piccadilly, Green Park or Bond Street