

WADDINGTON CUSTOT

Press release – February 26th 2026

The Nabi Shock

Inaugural exhibition at Waddington Custot's new Parisian gallery at 36 Rue de Seine, from 8 April to 6 June 2026

Opening reception on Thursday, 9 April 2026, starting at 6 p.m.



Paul Sérusier, *Bretonne allaitant*, 1892, oil on canvas, 73x55 cm (28,7 x 21,6 in)

Waddington Custot – an internationally renowned gallery specialising in modern and contemporary art, with established spaces in London and Dubai – marks a significant milestone with the opening of its Paris location. This new chapter is inaugurated by *The Nabi Shock*, a landmark exhibition devoted to a movement at the heart of the gallery's expertise. Bringing together key works by Émile Bernard, Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Charles Filiger, Paul Ranson, József Rippl-Rónai, Ker-Xavier Roussel, Paul Sérusier and Edouard Vuillard, the exhibition foregrounds the subtle radicalism of these modernist artists. Presented alongside works by contemporary artists, such as Etel Adnan, Ben Arpéa, Marcel·la Barcelò, Ian Davenport, Marcel Dzama, Pierre Knop, François Réau, Anne Rothenstein, Christine Safa, and Fabienne Verdier, *The Nabi Shock* reveals the striking contemporary resonance of the Nabis aesthetic, in which colour, rhythm, and interiority remain the driving forces.

Firmly established in London over 60 years and a pioneer in Dubai since 2016, Waddington Custot has chosen Saint-Germain-des-Prés as its new base. Located at 36 rue de Seine, behind a majestic façade, this 150 m² space unfolds across two levels, brings the gallery closer to the movements that have shaped its identity, placing it at the heart of a vibrant and demanding cultural and artistic ecosystem. The new location also reaffirms the gallery's longstanding ties to France, where Stéphane Custot directed Galerie Hopkins and co-founded PAD, the leading design fair held in Paris and London.

This new space has been entrusted to Isaure de Roquefeuil and Antoine Clavé, who strike a balance between the gallery's heritage and a contemporary vision. Having led Waddington Custot Dubai for several years, Isaure de Roquefeuil brings substantial international experience and an in-depth knowledge of artistic and institutional networks to Paris. Alongside her, the Parisian gallerist Antoine Clavé contributes his profound understanding of the local context combined with a keen awareness of contemporary market dynamics.

“We are proud to open our first Parisian space in the vibrant artistic hub of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. We aim to contribute to the renewal of Rue de Seine, where artistic forms and eras have always been in dialogue, reflecting our own manifesto which unites leading figures of modern art with major contemporary creators. For this inaugural exhibition, we are presenting the Nabis alongside a new generation of artists, at a time when this significant art historical movement is receiving considerable institutional attention in the form of large-scale exhibitions, such as those at the National Library of France and La Pedrera in Barcelona.” — Stéphane Custot



Isaure de Roquefeuil and Antoine Clavé

The Nabi Shock, inaugural exhibition

For its inaugural exhibition, Waddington Custot presents the Nabis, a pioneering movement within European modernism in which the gallery has long held recognised expertise. The exhibition brings together around thirty works by the leading figures of the movement, including Émile Bernard, Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Charles Filiger, Paul Ranson, József Rippl-Rónai, Ker-Xavier Roussel, Paul Sérusier and Edouard Vuillard

As proponents of Paul Gauguin's philosophy, which advocated the right "to dare anything", the Nabis drew inspiration from the painter's quest for colour liberation and his conception of painting as an inner spiritual journey. One of the most notable works produced under Gauguin's direct influence was *Le Talisman* by Paul Sérusier, which became a foundational work and aesthetic touchstone for the group.

The term "Nabi", borrowed from Hebrew and meaning "prophet", reflects both the spiritual quest and innovative ambition of this collective, which saw itself as heralding an artistic renewal. The Nabis favoured simplified forms and swathes of colour, as seen in *Bretonne allaitant* by Paul Sérusier. The influence of Neo-Impressionism is also prevalent in Pierre Bonnard's *Étude pour Le Corsage à Carreaux*, while Japonism shaped the work of artists such as Paul Ranson, exemplified in *Le Grand Tigre*.

Closely aligned with Symbolism, the Nabis were equally attentive to contemporary life, seeking to celebrate the everyday. Interior scenes, contemplative figures and stylised landscapes were thus elevated to the status of artistic subjects in their own right. Despite being composed exclusively of men, the group drew constant inspiration from women, making "their mother, their companion or wife, their sister" as "privileged models" (Gilles Genty), as exemplified by Maurice Denis's *Portrait de Marthe au tablier rouge (esquisse)* and Ker-Xavier Roussel's *Femmes au jardin*.



Maurice Denis, *Le Cheval blanc (projet de vitrail)*, gouache on paper laid on canvas, 140x85 cm (55 1/8 x 33 1/2 in)

Drawing inspiration from prints, stained glass and folk art, the Nabis movement rejected the traditional hierarchy of genres and advocated continuity between the so-called 'major' and 'minor' arts. The same rigorous approach was therefore applied to painting, decoration, printmaking and the applied arts, resulting in a variety of projects, such as Maurice Denis' stained-glass design *Le Cheval blanc*. This openness enabled the group to experiment with a variety of media, playing a pivotal role in the evolution of the decorative arts and reproducible practices at the dawn of modernity.

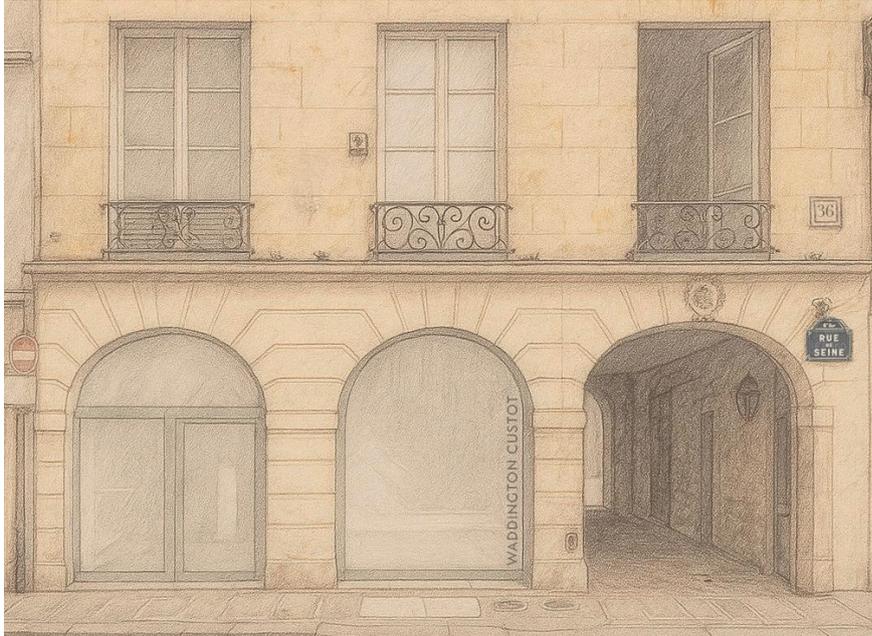
The 'Nabi shock' is embodied through an unprecedented dialogue between works by the Nabis and contemporary pieces by Etel Adnan, Ben Arpea, Marcella Barceló, Ian Davenport, Marcel Dzama, Pierre Knop, François Réau, Anne Rothenstein, Christine Safa and Fabienne Verdier, highlighting a shared conception of painting as an autonomous, sensory and interior space.

While the Nabis championed a subjective, decorative and synthetic approach to painting, in which colour, rhythm and interiority took precedence over illusionistic representations of reality, this sensibility continues to resonate in contemporary practice.

Through radical simplification and bold chromatic choices, Etel Adnan's compositions reflect the spiritual journey and symbolic depth of artists such as Charles Filiger. Fabienne Verdier's concentrated, meditative and physical gesture engages in dialogue with Maurice Denis's conception of painting as an inner experience. Ian Davenport's work features repetition, fluidity, and the musicality of colour, building upon the creative and rhythmic ambition evident in the oeuvre of Pierre Bonnard and Édouard Vuillard.

Like the Nabis, these contemporary artists embrace a variety of artistic languages while sharing a common intention: to reaffirm a vision of painting in which surface, material, and colour become vehicles for a poetic and interior experience of the world. In doing so, they inscribe the Nabi aesthetic within a living and ongoing history.

A catalogue featuring texts by art historian Gilles Genty further expands upon this perspective and sheds light on the historical and contemporary significance of this artistic constellation.



Façade of the Waddington Custot gallery at 36 Rue de Seine, ©DR

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About Waddington Custot

Founded in 2010 as a partnership between gallery owners Leslie Waddington and Stéphane Custot, the Waddington Custot Gallery continues a tradition of excellence on London's Cork Street that dates back over 60 years. Since 2015, the gallery has been under the sole direction of Stéphane Custot and is renowned for its expertise in modern and contemporary masterpieces, particularly monumental sculpture, works by the Nabis painters, and photorealist art. The gallery organises rigorously researched exhibitions devoted to influential artists from the 20th century to the present day, including Fabienne Verdier, Hans Hartung, Pierre Soulages and Bernar Venet, as well as contemporary artists such as Kenia Almaraz Murillo, Peter Blake, Patrick Caulfield and Ian Davenport. Waddington Custot now has three locations: London (established 1958), Dubai (established 2016) and Paris (established April 2026).

For further information

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