

**MUSÉE
UNTER
LINDEN**

Fabienne Verdier – The Song of the Stars

**Exhibition from 1 October 2022 to 28 March 2023
Musée Unterlinden, Colmar**

Curator: Frédérique Goerig-Hergott



Fabienne Verdier in her studio © Laura Stevens, 2021

**A monographic exhibition of the work of Fabienne Verdier
specifically created for the Musée Unterlinden**

In autumn 2022, the Musée Unterlinden will devote a major monographic exhibition to Fabienne Verdier, comprising 92 works responding to the museum's collections and architecture.

Fabienne Verdier was born in Paris in 1962 and studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Toulouse. Since then, engagement with systems of thought deriving from different cultures and eras has constituted a recurrent theme in her career, whilst her creative process has been enriched by hybridisation of knowledge, manifesting itself through various technical inventions.

In Colmar, Fabienne Verdier will invite visitors to take a new perspective on certain works from the Musée Unterlinden's collections, in particular by highlighting the importance of the vibrations of light and the energy that emanates from them. In the imposing contemporary nave, designed by the architects Herzog & de Meuron to host temporary exhibitions, the artist will present an original monumental installation linked to the Resurrection panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece, offering a new iconographic representation inspired by the colour spectrum and the aura of light painted by Grünewald. The installation suggests an approach to the subject of death in which it is no longer represented as something finite, but as the trace of an energy that is transmitted to the living. The title of the exhibition, "The Song of the Stars", is a poetic reference to the link between humanity and the cosmos, the vital energy between dissolution and expansion, because as Hubert Reeves put it so nicely, "we are all stardust".

A monumental, immersive installation inviting contemplation

The exhibition is designed as a progression beginning **in the permanent collections, where Fabienne Verdier's creations sit alongside Old Master paintings and works of modern art.** By playing on correspondences of forms, rhythms, colours, compositions or subjects, she encourages visitors to think about the way they approach an artwork and to take a fresh perspective on the paintings of Martin Schongauer, Lucas Cranach, Jean-Jacques Henner, Serge Poliakoff, Jean Dubuffet or Georg Baselitz.

In the Ackerhof, the imposing temporary exhibition room by the architects Herzog & de Meuron, the artist and the curator imagined **a large-scale installation entitled "Rainbows"**, with the aim of transforming the space into a place of contemplation and silence.

Over a period of nearly three years, Fabienne Verdier has created a **monumental group of seventy-six paintings** relating to the museum's polyptychs and more specifically to Grünewald's panel of the Resurrection. The artist was particularly struck by the image of Christ transfigured and surging upwards in a halo of light, radiating outwards into the starry night.

Based on Grünewald's panel and rejecting the traditional imagery historically found in Western art (*danses macabres*, skeletons and the Last Judgement), the artist presents a **new iconography inspired by contemporary observations of the aura of light produced when a star dies.**

Conceived as individual entities, the different paintings to be presented on the side walls **each have a name linked to the sky, the stars or light as their title.**

Fabienne Verdier's collaboration with the lexicographer Bérangère Baucher made her aware that on the five continents and in almost all cultures, parents sometimes choose names for their children that "sing" of humanity's relationship to the cosmos. A group of international linguists brought together for the project

catalogued and collected these given names that "look to the skies". On the back of each painting, the artist has written the name she chose for it, in the original language, transcribed and in translation. An information panel will enable visitors to identify "the individuals" who make up this constellation of stars resonating beneath the room's ceiling. For the artist, these circles of light or *Rainbow Paintings* are portraits linked to those who were taken from us by Covid-19, which prevented their friends and family from being with them and later performing their funeral rites. Conceived as contemporary icons, they aim to console or soothe those who have suffered the consequences of the coronavirus personally or amongst those close to them.

This **desire to create a universal artwork** with which visitors can identify is not without its similarities to Grünewald, whose famous altarpiece was intended for the sick in the care of the Antonite monastery of Isenheim in the 16th century.

At the end of the contemporary nave, visitors will be faced with a vast painting, *Vortex*, which represents the culmination and synthesis of the reverberating waves of the light paintings on the side walls. Between darkness and light, the expanding flow of white energy contrasts with the painting's midnight blue background. As in Grünewald's work, it evokes the connection between earth and the skies, the movement of ascension and the dissolution of matter. **The whole installation takes the form of a total artwork creating an immersive experience for the public.**



Fabienne Verdier in her studio © Laura Stevens



Fabienne Verdier in her studio © Laura Stevens

Fabienne Verdier (Paris, 1962)

After studying at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Toulouse, she trained in China between 1983 and 1992, alongside great masters (Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing), becoming the first foreigner to receive a post-graduate diploma in art from this prestigious university. She then spent several years immersing herself in the work of the abstract expressionists to create a series of paintings for the Hubert Looser Foundation in Zurich. Between 2009 and 2013 she turned her attention to the work of the Flemish Primitives for an exhibition with the Groeningemuseum in Bruges.

In 2013, she worked with Jean Nouvel on the design for Beijing's future museum of art, the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC).

In 2014, she installed a studio at the Juilliard School (New York), which was the first time it had agreed to host a research laboratory investigating pictorial and sound waves.

Between 2015 and 2017, she worked with Alain Rey on the fiftieth-anniversary edition of the Petit Robert dictionary, producing 22 paintings celebrating the creative energy of language.

In 2019, she was the subject of a major retrospective at the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence.

Fabienne Verdier's work has been exhibited in numerous countries and is held in several public collections, including the National Museum of Modern Art-Centre Pompidou and the Musée Cernuschi in Paris, the Kunsthaus in Zurich, the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich and the National Museum in Oslo. She is also represented at the Musée Barbier-Mueller in Geneva and the Pinault Collection.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition catalogue looks at Fabienne Verdier's distinctive approach in the context of her project in Colmar begun in January 2019. The contributions from the different authors serve to elucidate the premise of the exhibition and the specific approach underpinning the artist's work. The publication is illustrated with all 92 works to be shown by Fabienne Verdier at the Musée Unterlinden (77 in the Ackerhof room + 15 in the permanent collections) as well as Laura Stevens' photographs taken in the artist's studio (2021-2022).

Authors: Bérangère Baucher, Jean Frémon, Frédérique Goerig-Hergott, Florian Steininger, Trinh Xuan Thuan
Interview between Fabienne Verdier and Edgar Morin, **words collected by Michel Eltchaninoff**

Publisher: 5 Continents Editions, Milan

Publication: september 2022

Price : 30 €

Exhibition curator: Frédérique Goerig-Hergott, senior curator

Exhibition assistant: Léa Rosenfeld

Practical information

Place Unterlinden – 68000 Colmar

Tel. +33 (0)3 89 20 15 50

info@musee-unterlinden.com

www.musee-unterlinden.com

Opening hours

Monday - Sunday 9am-6pm

Tuesday: closed

Admissions

Full price / €13, Concessions / €11, Families / €35

Free / under 18s

Audioguides (French/German) for the exhibition available at the ticket office

Press contacts

National and international press

anne samson communications

Federica Forte

+33 (0)7 50 82 00 84 / 01 40 36 84 40

federica@annesamson.com

Local and regional press

Musée Unterlinden

Laurane Saad

+ 33 (0)3 89 20 22 74

communication@musee-unterlinden.com