

[EN]

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MUTE

FABIENNE VERDIER

22 OCTOBER 2025 – 16 FEBRUARY 2026

The exhibition *Mute – Fabienne Verdier* embodies the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine's stated desire to foster dialogue between architecture and contemporary visual arts. Architects and artists have always inspired each other. While remaining distinct, these disciplines share the same visual culture and narratives that have continually intertwined.

The medieval and classical architecture gallery takes visitors on a journey through sculptures and architectural elements from the Romanesque period to the early 19th century. It offers a rich landscape of forms, materials, symbols, and figures in motion that mark the history of architecture.

Forms, materials, and movement are also at the heart of Fabienne Verdier's work. Her abstract painting is a silent language, like many of the medieval sculptures around it. Her sources of inspiration are manifold and draw on the old masters. Her canvases silently reflect this view of art history, like a synthesis of the riches explored.

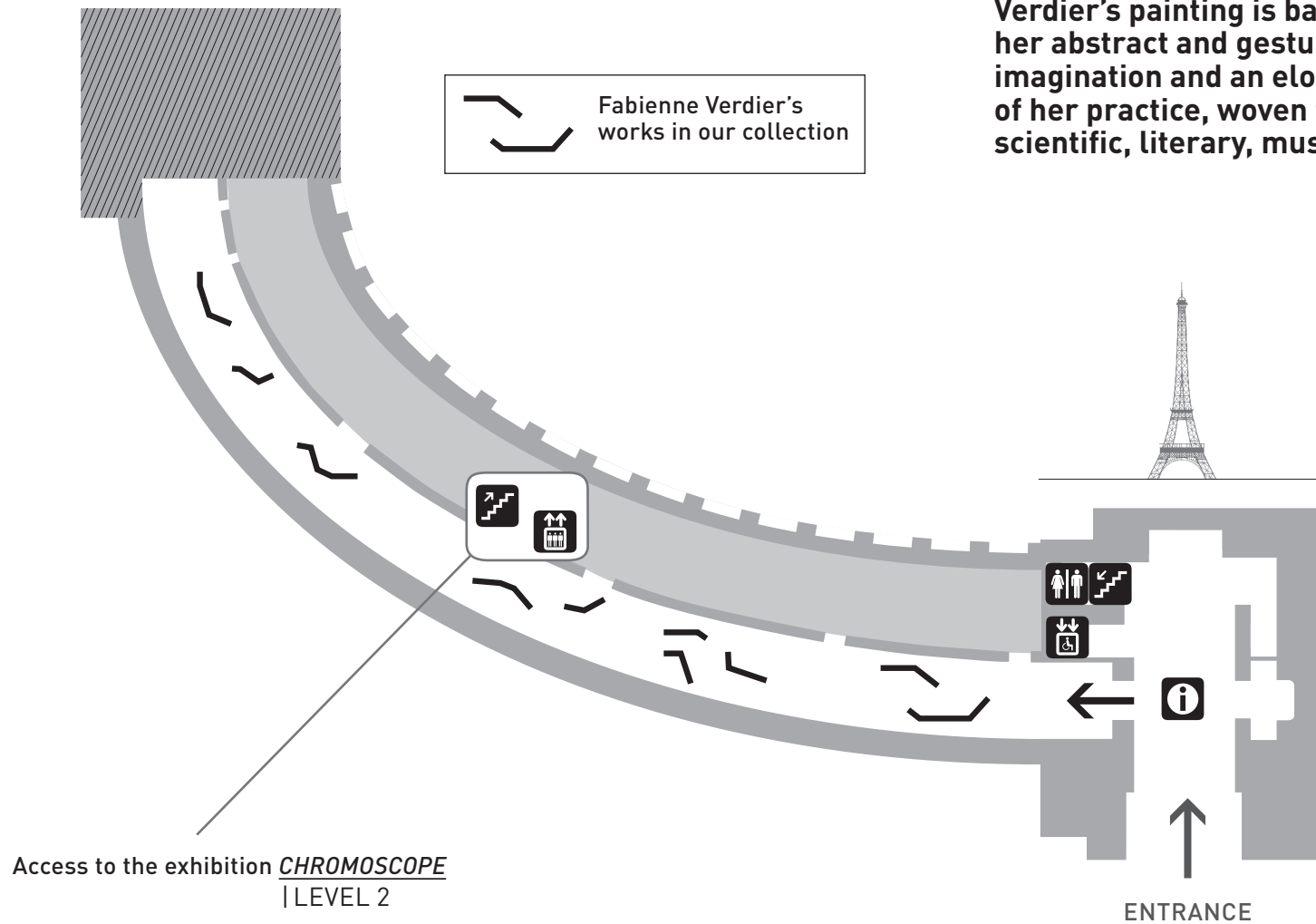
Fabienne Verdier's works also bear witness to the vital energy that the painter imparts with her tools, her giant brushes, and her liquid paint. The exploration of this vital flow, this perpetual movement, is also present in many works by medieval sculptors. The poetry of their taut lines stems just as much from the momentum of their gestures as they test the limits of the material.

This exhibition invites everyone to take turns looking at the ancient and contemporary works. What kind of world do we live in? What links can we establish between the past and the present? How do the works of the past affect us today? How do they cleanse our gaze, which is inundated with a thousand images per second? And, in return, how do we renew our view of these images from the past?

By combining heritage collections with contemporary creations, the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine offers new narratives and promotes a better mutual understanding of works and eras.

MEDIEVAL AND CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE

“Mute” launches a series of contemporary art exhibitions curated by art historian Matthieu Poirier at the Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine. The exhibition brings together some forty large-scale works created by Fabienne Verdier (born in Paris, 1962) between 1996 and 2024. Its title, “mute”, in addition to meaning “silent,” is the imperative of the French verb “muter”, meaning “mutate.” It invites us to experience the silent vitality or, in other words, the mutant mutism of Fabienne Verdier’s works. Verdier’s painting is based on a paradox, even an oxymoron: her abstract and gestural silence is the fruit of a prolific imagination and an eloquence that have always been a feature of her practice, woven from an abundance of iconographic, scientific, literary, musical and philosophical sources.



The layout of the exhibition reflects the gestural fluctuations of her paintings. It takes the shape of an archipelago of islands and islets winding through the 1,500 m² of the permanent collections. Its discontinuity and rhythm offer innumerable perspectives and surprising dialogues. With their formal intensity, complex branching structure and subdued palette, these works share space with the casts, resonating with their bright, mineral tonality. They engage with the equally eloquent silence of the sculptures and the architecture.

The exhibition opens with her first abstract works, produced in 1996. These show a departure from calligraphy, which had played an important role in the artist's learning process. In them, she moves away from the semantic tutelage of this language to explore more deeply notions such as the vital essence of the universe, the dynamics of gesture and gravity, sensation and emergence, and the phenomenology of perception. She excels in revealing in the art of the past the forces that underpin our tangible world. It is a sizeable challenge, as she is swimming against the tide in aligning herself with

postwar movements believed to have ended a long time ago, such as Lyrical Abstraction, Abstract Expressionism and the Gutai movement. She observes, while being careful not to copy, the creations of Kazuo Shiraga, Helen Frankenthaler, Jean Degottex and Hans Hartung. Her singularity is apparent in the complex monochrome contours of each painted shape, which captivate, extend and disperse our gaze. Such an arborescence of motifs reflects the profusion of its roots, which draw on diverse sources of inspiration.

Keen to 'discover an order of natural laws in the brushwork', she borrows from Heraclitus, Henri Bergson and Gaston Bachelard to develop a vitalist artistic language incorporating elements, phenomena, flux and continuity. She is not merely creating objects or paintings; she is using them to channel the invisible forces of the world and convey them to the viewer. Neurophysiologist Alain Berthoz, who co-signed with her one of the works in the exhibition (*Ressac*, 2020), evokes the role played by mirror neurons, which enable us, through sight, to understand movement and to experience it as though we ourselves were executing it.

In an unbroken, flowing progression, the gaze eludes the control of consciousness, thereby challenging its own fluidity. It is guided from one work to another, or moves from a view of the whole to the examination of a detail. Ultimately, each painting appears as a fragment of an infinite continuum. The colour and pattern are usually continued along the wide borders of the works. In doing so, each detail loses its supposed uniqueness and becomes nothing more than an undifferentiated section of a true fractal – a motif whose irregularities and variations remain similar regardless of whether they are viewed up close or from a distance.

Like a body carried by the current, our gaze travels around these liquid labyrinths, whose sections, sometimes very voluminous, as though swollen with sap, acquire an almost sculptural quality that is reinforced by the thickness of the frames. The painted shapes, with biomorphic accents, reflect the light. Their pathways or ramifications seem to be constantly contracting and expanding, like strange creatures, both animal and vegetable, whose limbs direct both the gaze and the pictorial matter in a single movement.

The subtly raised volume of these contours awakens in us mental images relating to the sense of touch. These motifs ('motif' derived from the Latin *motus*, meaning movement) seem to leap out at us with the same energy that animated the raw material when it first emerged on the canvas – an energy that the film *Walking Painting* (2016) captures with acuity. At their extremities, these networks direct our gaze into the depths of the uniform background, seeping into the folds of the canvas or the grain of the wood, or drive it out of the frame altogether. This painted background plays the role of an amniotic or cosmogonic environment, conducive to the vitalistic expansion of the gestural motif. This nebulous background is usually monochrome and treated like a palimpsest or a vibrating sfumato.

Fabienne Verdier's paintings give a misleading impression of graphic simplicity. In fact, she has discarded and destroyed a considerable number of paintings, and it has taken her several decades to devise – through constantly making improvements – an impressive system that increases her ability to control movement, both muscularly and proprioceptively. This involves the use of massive brushes and large-scale nozzles, with a capacity of several litres, whose multidimensional movement is enabled by a complex system of hoists, cables and counterweights. These exoskeletal structures serve as a prosthetic extension of the hand, like the stick used by Jackson Pollock for his drip paintings, the bamboo pole used by Henri Matisse or the rakes and pressure sprayers used by Hans Hartung.

Fabienne Verdier's heightened sensitivity has long led her to flee the hustle and bustle of Paris and set up her studio, her home and, of course, her library in a tranquil village in the north of France. Another reason to engage here with the paintings – her emissaries, speaking with silent eloquence.

AROUND OF THE EXHIBITION

I FLASH TOURS (in English)

Guides welcome you every day in the exhibition.

Feel free to ask them questions!

I GUIDED TOURS (in French)

Saturdays, November 8, December 6 and 27,
February 7 • 15pm

1h / €5 (+ admission ticket)

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

CITÉ DE L'ARCHITECTURE ET DU PATRIMOINE

Palais de Chaillot. Place du Trocadéro

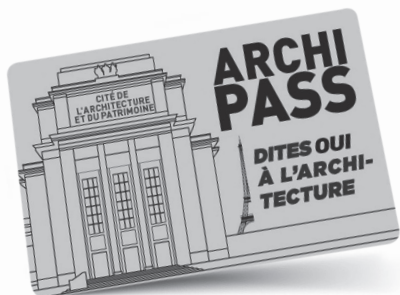
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OPENING HOURS

Open every day except Tuesday

11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Late opening on Thursdays

until 9 p.m.

Closed on January 1, May 1, July 14,
and December 25

ADMISSION FEES

13 € / 10 €

EXHIBITIONS

ALBUM DES JEUNES ARCHITECTES ET PAYSAGISTE 2023

October 16 – November 17, 2025

PARIS 1925 – L'ART DÉCO ET SES ARCHITECTES

October 22, 2025 – March 29, 2026

CHROMOSCOPE – A LOOK AT THE *COLOR FIELD MOVEMENT*

October 22, 2025 – February 16, 2026

QUARTIERS DE DEMAIN

December 3, 2025 – March 30, 2026

**Find the full programme at
CITEDELARCHITECTURE.FR/EN**

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