



# Soul Search

↳ EXHIBITION: Swiss artist and physical therapist Fabien Ballif, artistically known as 'Fabal', went on a long journey to discover his passion to paint. Sometimes we go on a faraway personal quest to find what we need very close to our roots.

Gusta van Dobbenburgh  
Curator

Fabien Ballif's work depicts his search for color, clarity and striking the right mood. Numerous pieces show his need to separate different pursuits. They portray clear distinctions, whether done in softer, tender hues or in more recent bright surges of color that seem to surge up to the skies, radiating freedom and movement. An interview.

**GvD: When did you realize that you had artistic talents?**

→ FB: "I developed a love for imaginative expression early on and won a design prize at the age of sixteen. I also enjoyed acting. I was a bit of a clown; loved to entertain people, did impressions, put professional make up on my face and wore costumes, like actors do. I also played piano for about ten years. So there was always a mix of creative things."

**GvD: How did you discover that you wanted to become a painter?**

→ FB "Through a long explore. A previous career in professional skiing did not fulfill me. I took a break and flew to Australia where I backpacked around the continent and also visited New Zealand. It was a time of intense travel.

In 1998 I joined acting school in Geneva for three years while I worked part time. Between 2001 and 2010 I appeared in roughly twenty five contemporary plays mostly in Switzerland but also in Spain and France.

**GvD: Were you getting closer to painting in the mean time?**

→ FB: "Yes I was. In 2008, in Winterthur, I met Amma, a renowned spiritual Hindu healer from India. She shared her healing karma with people who were interested in knowing more about their lives. Through her divine presence it became clear to me that mine would be devoted to taking care of others physically and spiritually. At an artistic level meeting her was

of major importance to my life as well."

**GvD: So what happened after the connection with Amma?**

→ FB: "I went to the School for Physical Therapy in Lutry and became a professional masseur. Moving away more and more from the world's egocentricity I became increasingly interested in what moves us as people. I wanted to have an understanding of that. While developing a professional clientele as a masseur I also wanted to express my personal feelings and began to paint. I have always worked on various things simultaneously while needing a connection between them at the same time. Being a masseur and painter I now feel much more in the right place than ever before. Additionally, Buddhism taught me to stay true to doing what I love."

**GvD: Where does your inspiration come from when you paint?**

→ FB: "The inspiration comes from within and without. I go to

my studio where I connect with my inner self in a kind of meditative state which requires peace, connection and concentration. When I paint I know when to begin and when to leave the canvas alone. It feels like everything necessary for the piece has been said. I can read it very well and consequently discover what a piece conveys so I can give it the right title. In the process I tried different media such as pastels, pencils and collages. In 2012 I had a 'declic': through abstraction I found a field of freedom and space that perfectly matches my creative process and the essence of my art."

**GvD: Does painting help you in your practice as well?**

→ FB: "Absolutely. When I paint a holy source emerges in the creative process. That spiritual aspect is also present during my work as a physical therapist. I 'ask' a safe source for healing energy and bring that, through my own presence, to my clients."

Just before this article went to press Fabien was accepted and listed as a professional artist by the art specialist Akoun; a big acknowledgement.

Through the energy from the universe he now follows his own wave.

Enjoy the show! ☰

## Fabal



"Source" © Fabal, 2013

Another World  
Abstract acrylic  
paintings on canvas  
Fabal

Website:

[www.fabienballif.com](http://www.fabienballif.com)

Show: April 7 - May 30

Vernissage: Thursday,

April 10, 18h00 - 20h00

Location: ELA Cafeteria

Art Space room 010

Information:

[astie.epfl.ch](mailto:astie.epfl.ch)

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