

# BEYOND THE VISIBLE

## Interview with Fabienne Blanc

For some artists, creation is not simply a choice, but a deep, almost organic necessity. This is precisely what emerges from Fabienne's practice, whose artistic path has been shaped at the intersection of architectural rigor and pictorial freedom.

After a rich career in architecture, she made a bold shift to devote herself fully to painting, sensitively exploring the boundaries between figuration and abstraction. Her work, nourished by landscape, travel, and a constant spirit of inquiry, reveals a particular attention to invisible tensions, silences, and the forces that shape our perception of the world.

Through watercolor, oil painting, and digital explorations on tablet — some of which evolve into finished works — Fabienne captures far more than a place or a form: she reveals its essence, what endures beyond the visible.

Between material, light, and emotion, her work invites immersion, where each color becomes a presence, each mark a breath.

In this interview, she reflects on her journey, her influences, and her vision of creation, offering an intimate insight into an artistic universe in constant evolution.



**1. After a rich career in architecture, you chose to devote yourself fully to painting. How has this life change transformed your deep-rooted need to create?**

For twenty-three years, I worked in an architectural firm specializing in the rehabilitation of social housing. Architecture is a fascinating discipline, but creativity there is always framed by numerous constraints such as technical, regulatory, and urban. One must constantly adapt without losing sight of the project's original intent.

When I turned fully to painting, I discovered a freedom I had never known before. Faced with a blank sheet or canvas, I am now entirely responsible for my choices. This freedom is both stimulating and demanding: it is up to me to decide whether a work is right or whether it should be abandoned.

This new phase also led me to explore other artistic techniques. Out of curiosity and a desire to learn, I became interested in lithography, engraving, linocut, as well as anatomical drawing and life drawing. These practices nourish my eye and enrich my pictorial research. Painting also requires great discipline. I work every day, because it is through practice that one ultimately finds one's own visual language.

**2. Your work constantly oscillates between figuration and abstraction. During the creative process, how do you sense the moment when a work should remain anchored in reality or, on the contrary, move toward pure abstraction?**

My work often exists in a space between figuration and abstraction. I usually begin with a photograph, which I analyze by identifying the structural lines that shape the image. These lines guide me in organizing the pictorial space.

I then use a deliberately limited palette, often built around two main tones developed from light to dark. Gradually, the subject may remain identifiable or begin to transform: when lines, planes, and colors take precedence over representation, the image naturally shifts toward abstraction.

At the same time, I also create fully abstract compositions drawn from my imagination. I develop these primarily on a tablet, which serves as a space for experimentation where forms can be freely recomposed.



**3. Landscape seems to be your primary terrain. What draws you so strongly to this motif, and how does it shape those “lines of force, tensions, breaths, and silences” you describe so vividly?**

Landscape is indeed my preferred terrain, particularly in watercolor. I worked extensively with this medium in 1999, during a period of discovery. Its fluidity and immediately appealed to me.

Most of my watercolors are based on photographs taken during my travels, although I have also painted directly from life. I recall, for instance, a watercolor painted in Crete: I had set up my easel along a path lined with olive trees, with hills in the distance and a sky crossed by ultramarine-grey clouds. Under the sun, the water dried very quickly, and I had to work with great speed.



*Arouze au coucher du soleil, Hautes-Alpes (1999)*

As for the lines of force, tensions, and silences that may be perceived in my work, I only truly analyze them afterward. While painting, I work above all instinctively. What appears in the image is already within me; painting simply reveals it.



#### **4. You speak of revealing “what persists beyond representation.” How does this idea take shape in your daily work in the studio?**

When I begin a painting, there is always a motif: a landscape, an interior, a figure, or sometimes simply an interplay of colors and forms. But this motif is only a starting point. As the work unfolds, I seek above all to bring forth a sensation — a tension, a breath, an atmosphere.

Revealing what persists beyond representation means creating an image that is not limited to what it shows. A painting should evoke an impression that lingers, like a sensory memory.

Often, when facing a work, one simply says, “I like it” or “I don’t like it.” But something more subtle can occur. That is precisely what I am seeking: a perception that does not pass solely through the intellect, but through the senses.

#### **5. Watercolor lies at the heart of your practice. In your view, what is it about water that allows it to capture the soul of a place better than any other medium?**

Watercolor is both simple and demanding. Unlike oil painting, it leaves very little room for correction: once the color is laid down, one must move forward with it. One works from light tones to dark, and every gesture matters.

Water plays a fundamental role. It carries the pigment, dilutes it, and allows it to move across the paper. Depending on the moisture of the surface, pigments may meet with precision or blend more freely. There is always an element of unpredictability.

This dialogue with water feels very close to nature itself. Watercolor makes it possible to capture something fragile and ephemeral: the light of a sky, the breath of a landscape, the atmosphere of a place. This is undoubtedly why it feels so apt for capturing what I call the presence of a landscape.

#### **6. Your background in architecture seems to resonate in your compositions. How does this structural rigor continue to shape your painterly vision?**

This sense of structure and volume is deeply ingrained in me. It is part of the way I see the world. When composing a painting, I do not consciously think in architectural terms, yet this internal construction naturally asserts itself.



In both my landscapes and more abstract works, I remain attentive to lines of force, balance, and the tension between masses and voids. These are reflexes inherited from architecture.

This is also why Cézanne has been such an important influence. In his landscapes, he constructs the painting almost like an edifice, organizing space through forms and volumes. This way of conceiving painting as a living structure speaks to me deeply.

Architecture taught me how to build space; painting now allows me to make it breathe.

## **7. You use digital research as a kind of experimental laboratory. How do these digital explorations inform or challenge your watercolor and acrylic work?**

Digital research is a true laboratory for me. On a tablet, I can work very freely, much like on paper, but with additional possibilities: zooming into the image, quickly testing different color combinations, modifying forms or compositions.

This is where forms begin to take shape before becoming paintings. It is also where I develop my current research into semi-figurative, semi-abstract work. The tablet allows me to explore structures, rhythms, and color relationships without material constraints.



*Cocon (2025)*



Some of these explorations become works in their own right. Others remain as sketches, a reservoir of ideas that will inform future acrylic paintings, a medium I now wish to explore in order to give these ideas a more tangible presence.

## 8. Your palette is often described as luminous and vibrant. How do you “sculpt” color to give it such energy and presence?

I have a deep love for color, it resonates within me. The energy perceived in my paintings likely comes from that; it is already there and emerges almost despite me when I paint.



*Emiettement (2025)*

I approach color somewhat as a sculptor approaches material. A sculptor carves into a block of marble to reveal form; I juxtapose colors, confront them, and allow them to interact until a balance emerges.

Color is never merely decorative. It carries tension and breath. A painting feels complete when the colors begin to “sing” together. That is when I feel the work truly comes into being.



**9. From Île de Ré to Morocco, via Brittany, your travels seem to leave lasting impressions. How do these different atmospheres and cultures infuse your visual language?**

During these trips — often taken in groups focused on watercolor practice — I work in sketchbooks. These are short but very intense stays, where we paint directly from observation. One cannot capture everything, so the eye naturally becomes selective: one retains a rhythm, a light, a horizon line, a detail of architecture.



*Barno (2025)*

In a sketchbook, a few lines and touches of color can sometimes evoke a landscape more powerfully than a fully rendered page. I also enjoy using two open pages to create panoramic formats that give the landscape its full breadth.

Each place leaves a sensory imprint. The atmospheres, light, and cultures permeate me. But before I begin to paint, there must first be a sense of pleasure in front of the subject. From there, drawing and color come naturally. My approach remains quite pared down: I seek the essential rather than description.



**10. With an international trajectory already marked by events such as Red Dot Miami, how do you envision the evolution of your work in the coming years?**

For now, I approach my work day by day. Developments unfold step by step. It is difficult to project too far ahead, as creation remains, for me, a living process that evolves gradually.

The challenge that currently drives me is to deepen the abstract dimension of my work. It represents something of a ninety-degree turn, pushing me beyond my comfort zone and into new pictorial territories.

In the years to come, I would like this exploration to lead to a truly distinctive artistic signature. My hope is that, when encountering a work, one might immediately recognize it as a “Fabienne Blanc.”



*Cocon 3 (2026)*

**Fabienne Blanc**

<https://fabienne-blanc.fr/en/>

