

Wilde

Jan Fabre

New Works / Mosaics

Curated by Joanna De Vos

12.11. – 21.12.2023

WILDE | BASEL

Wilde presents Jan Fabre's latest exhibition in Basel, marking our fifth collaboration with the artist. *New Works / Mosaics* represents three years of dedicated work and showcases mosaics organized into four thematic groups: *I am Blood*, *The Fountain of the World*, *Carnival*, and *Feast of Little Friends*. Each series is an exploration of perspective, an interplay between the tangible mosaic and the transcendent concept it embodies. A new book accompanies the exhibition, published by FORMA, with authors including Edwin Becker, Joanna De Vos, Giacinto Di Pietrantonio, Yuko Hasegawa, Katerina Koskina, and Dimitri Ozerkov.

Elaborating on the ancient craft of mosaic making, Fabre re-envisioned his archival drawings and watercolours through this time-honored medium. His reexamination of *Feast of Little Friends*, a series he made in his early 20s, extends beyond nostalgia, embraces experimentation and reaffirms the enduring relevance of traditional art in the modern era.

Fabre's work engages deeply with the carnivalesque, weaving together themes of mortality and reality. His pieces echo the celebratory and the macabre, a nod to Belgian cultural festivities, encased in opulence and framed with a critical eye. Through this lens, Fabre probes societal masks and satirizes historical pretenses, crafting a dialogue that resonates with the satirical works of Félicien Rops and others.

In the micromosaic domain, Fabre's intricate labor mirrors the precision of horology, marrying luxury with artistic worship and showcasing the sacredness of minutiae. Fabre's mastery of symbolism shines in his mosaics, where royal and spiritual undertones meet, adorned with 24-carat gold. He takes inspiration from medieval to Christological narratives, offering contemporary meditations on age-old concepts like power, vulnerability, and transformation. His work becomes a modern vessel for the profound tales and emblems of bygone eras, simultaneously capturing the essence of the past and pressing into the future.

The Fountain of the World presented on the first-floor revisits Fabre's own 1979 drawings, reflecting on performance, art, and the fluidity of life, challenging conventional views and inviting audiences to reconsider the body's role in art and expression. Fabre further establishes a discourse, through subtle references, with a number of artists, and artworks, throughout art history, including with Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, Gustave Courbet's *The Origin of the World*, Nicolas Restif de la Bretonne, the Marquis de Sade, and Luis Buñuel.

This exhibition not only showcases Jan Fabre's profound engagement with artistic disciplines but also his ability to spur contemplation and redefine the boundaries of art. Wilde invites viewers to delve into the rich tapestry of Jan Fabre's mosaics and find themselves at the confluence of heritage and transformation.

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Biography

Jan Fabre, born in Antwerp in 1958, is a versatile artist known for his contributions to visual art, theater, and literature. He stands as one of the foremost innovators and influential figures in the realm of contemporary international art.

Notably, he achieved the distinction of being the first contemporary artist to hold solo exhibitions at prestigious institutions like the Louvre Museum in Paris in 2008 and the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg in 2017. Jan Fabre's artistic reach extends beyond traditional gallery spaces; he has been invited to create artworks for diverse public venues, including the Royal Palace in 2002, the Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 2013, the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp in 2015, and the Antwerp St. Augustine's Church/AMUZ in 2018.

Jan Fabre's most recent additions to permanent public installations can be found in Italy. Since 2019, his work has graced the chapel of Pio Monte della Misericordia in Naples, engaging in a captivating dialogue with a masterpiece by Caravaggio. In the same year, the artist further solidified his connection with Naples, unveiling two more permanent works at the Real Cappella del Tesoro di San Gennaro and the Church of Santa Maria delle Anime del Purgatorio ad Arco.

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