

DOLBY CHADWICK GALLERY

Jaq Chartier *Under the Sun*

Dolby Chadwick Gallery is delighted to announce *Under the Sun*, an exhibition of new work by Jaq Chartier, on view this May. Chartier's vibrant, alchemical artworks are investigations into how materials interact, colors shift, and affective experiences transport and transcend. This exhibition features her newest series, *SunTests*, which takes her practice in a remarkable new direction. Bruce Guenther, former chief curator at the Portland Museum of Art, writes: "Nationally recognized for her research and process-driven paintings, Jaq Chartier has moved into an exciting new scale and methodology in her painting practice, which enlarges the possibilities and potential of her work to move the viewer." These "time-based image captures," as Chartier refers to the new works, highlight the lyricism of impermanence through their unique mode of tracking change. *SunTest #10 (Day 1 & 38) (2020)*, for example, presents a symphony of blinking circles in mostly blues, greens, and purples that fades to a melody of quieter, lighter tones—a simultaneous view onto two separate movements.

SunTests is rooted in her painting practice and specifically in a series titled *Testing*, which is also included in this exhibition. Rather than paint, these works feature Chartier's own custom formulations blended from inks, dyes, and stains; because many of these materials are not typically found in art supply stores, she has to rigorously test them in order to understand how they react to light and interact. This process of experimentation forms the heart of the *Testing* paintings, which juxtapose maximal color formulations with minimalist, grid-inspired compositions. Her precise, measured arrangements of short notations in a spectrum of hues spanning the rainbow are often stacked ladder-like and reminiscent of DNA or cellular structures. Chartier notes that a method known as gel electrophoresis and images from biology and microbiology have also influenced her work. By encoding the basic building blocks of life into her aesthetic, she underscores her interest in close-looking and drilling down to the essence of a subject.

While the works are rooted in the scientific and the natural, there is something irrepressibly supernatural about them. Because of the way in which her inks, stains, and dyes bleed and seep through the spray paint and resin she layers onto the support, her notations—from the fluorescent to the faded—appear to nearly glow, rising from the surface like clouds of light and electricity.

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Chartier explains that, “for me, the supernatural is something that’s beyond our own understanding. There are things that we don’t know, and those things are that edge where we start to see a bigger picture of life. Some people don’t look at that edge, it makes them uncomfortable. I’m fascinated by it.” It is in Chartier’s meticulous approach to testing and questioning that the supernatural can be located.

As an abstract painter first and foremost, Chartier strives to create images that produce a visceral resonance within the viewer—a pursuit she pushes to the fore in the *SunTests* series, the primary focus of *Under the Sun*. To achieve this level of impact, she looks to artists such as James Turrell and Robert Irwin, whose respective installations in light and color generate immersive, full-body experiences that can only be appreciated in person. By commanding a meditative, magnetic aura that derives its power directly from its presence, Chartier’s work too can only be fully appreciated by standing before it. In so doing, the viewer can see the beauty in the work’s nuances, feel its larger energy, and enter into the same space the artist occupied when she made it.

The *SunTests* series has allowed Chartier to “follow that edge of what I don’t know” even further. The basis for each work is a single painting into which she introduces fugitive colors that transform over time as they are exposed to sunlight streaming in through her studio windows. Multiple panels feature different days, or moments, in a given painting’s evolution. Some *SunTests* are before-and-after diptychs that reflect the first and last day in a painting’s journey, while others comprise four or five panels so as to capture those in-between moments along the way, such as *SunTest #9 (Day 1, 9, 14, 25) (2020)*. For this work, a rainbow of vivid color notations bursts forth from the first panel; notes in graphite to the right identify the various formulations. As the painting progresses, certain colors begin to fade while others transform as component colors drop out—a muddy brown, for instance, becomes a vivid green. By masking certain sections to allow parts of the same mark to fade faster, Chartier is able to further showcase the relationships between the changing colors, bringing even greater coherence to the painting’s evolution.

To record each moment, Chartier upscales a high-resolution digital image that she then transfers onto a ChromaLux aluminum matrix via a heat-press dye-sublimation printing process. While the resulting panels are matte like her paintings, these time-based image captures are less about the paintings themselves than about documenting a painting “all at once” as it progresses through its journey toward a soft chorus of ghostly impressions and residual marking. “As things grow quieter

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and disappear, you can start to see what's really there." Chartier explains. "It goes back to music and the work of someone like Brian Eno—the more you strip out, the more you hear." The journey each painting takes also underscores the transience and impermanence that defines everything, including our lives. When you slow down and embrace this truth, the artist notes, you pay greater attention to the present moment and start to see beauty in the way things are.

Jaq Chartier earned a BFA in painting from the University of Massachusetts in 1984 and an MFA in painting from the University of Washington in 1994. Her work has been exhibited in museums across the United States and Europe, including the Bellevue Art Museum; the Berkeley Art Museum; the Frye Art Museum, Seattle; Kunsthaus Center d'art, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland; Kunstmuseum, Ahlen, Germany; the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Arts; the Seattle Art Museum; the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art; Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland; and Esbjerg Art Museum, Denmark. She has been reviewed in *Art in America*, *Art NEWS*, *Artforum*, *New York Observer*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Village Voice*. This is her third solo show at Dolby Chadwick Gallery.