

EN

# claircie chesnier

→ *une éclaircie à la verticale*  
*a vertical spreading*

centre  
de  
création  
contemporaine  
olivier  
debré

claire chesnier

white gallery  
06.06.2025 — 18.01.2026

curator's exhibition : Marine Rochard

The CCCOD has invited the artist Claire Chesnier to exhibit her latest paintings in the white gallery, each of which is a space, a moment, a memory, a recurrence.

Each of them is an interweaving of colours, transparencies and lightness, applied layer by layer, on the surface of which a horizontal division of masses has been created.

More subtle than a simple border, as delicate as a *quattrocento sfumato*, it resembles a horizon line marking the boundary between earth and sky.

For one of the rooms in the white gallery, the artist, in

collaboration with the start-up Olumeé, is also developing a new light installation that will allow us to experience the time involved in her painting, but also to discover how its appearance can change according to the time of day.

“A vertical spreading” is part of a cycle of solo and group exhibitions by Claire Chesnier that will take place in France and abroad from 2024 to 2026 and coincides with a publication <sup>01</sup> dedicated to her work.

## acknowledgements

*The cccod would like to warmly thank the artist for this valuable collaboration, full of sharing and dialogues, the gallery Ceysson & Bénétière for its support, as well as the private collections that have agreed to let go their art works during the duration of the exhibition.*

01 David Desrimais et  
Jean-Charles Vergne (éd.),  
*Claire Chesnier*, Paris,  
JBE Books, 2024 (available  
in the cccod bookshop).

about the  
exhibition →

# a vertical spreading

Understanding Claire Chesnier's work depends as much on what we look at as on how we look at it<sup>01</sup>, on the context of the observation, on the sensory and memorable impressions that touch us and connect us for a moment with those that accompanied the artist during the creation of the work. The words chosen to describe *her paintings*<sup>02</sup> can only be metaphorical or analogical, because "no matter how much we say what we see, what we see never fits into what we say"<sup>03</sup>; these works fully appeal to perception, to each of our senses.

They are also created on a human scale, or at least on the scale of the artist's body. For the viewer, too, the relationship with the work is physical from the outset: not only is the work a real presence in the room, but it is also transformed by the strange phenomenon at play on its surface. The colours melt imperceptibly before our eyes, giving us the illusion that

they are flowing, or rather that they are blending to take on new nuances that we had not noticed before. Clearly, these paintings do not require representation; they embody abstract ideas, if we may borrow these words from the choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker<sup>04</sup>; they give substance to the virtual existences<sup>05</sup> of our impressions.

And yet our gaze is drawn in, and our imagination wanders, against our will, through the colours, trying to see or feel in the clarity, in the fluorescence on the surface, in a ray of sunlight highlighting the dew on the grass in the morning, in a veil of mist drifting down a hillside. This allusion to the landscape, to the world of the senses, is contradicted by the systematic use of vertical formats, which are more reminiscent of the portrait tradition. Moreover, we sometimes encounter a kind of flatness more

01 I paraphrase André Gide, *The Fruits of the Earth*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971 [1897], p.21.

02 These paintings are not really paintings at all: the artist uses inks and pigments that she mixes with lots of water before applying them to a damp sheet of paper.

03 Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p.25.

04 Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, *Incarner une abstraction*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2020 [lecture at the Collège de France in 2019].

05 Regarding the « virtual existences », see Étienne Souriau, *Les Différents modes d'existence* (Paris, PUF, 2009 [1943]), and as interpreted by David Lapoujade, *Les Existences moindres* (Paris, Minuit, 2017).

than we penetrate the vastness and depth of a landscape. The lines of the horizon, uncertain edges that are sometimes only hinted at, are woven vertically by the juxtaposition, meeting and interpenetration of very fine lines of ink. Our gaze is immediately struck by a sense of discrepancy, of a physical impossibility, of an unthinkable fact, because this horizon line dissolves infinitely, flowing upwards against gravity, as if the earth - those dark masses at the bottom - were melting, only to be sucked up and breathed in by the sky.

Although the paintings seem ephemeral, they are nevertheless repeated allusions to the material world, to concrete reality, its textures, its brilliance, its hardness. They are raw, physical materials, but sometimes they are also about something contained, opaque, as if the painting were imbued, incorporated or embodied.

Claire Chesnier gives us “the physical possibility of feeling colour<sup>06</sup>”, by giving it a sense of vastness, space and duration.

The tension between horizontality and verticality, between flatness and expanse, produces a dizzying sensation that is difficult to describe in any intelligible way, and that also provokes a kind of incomprehension. Stunned to the point of blindness and deafness, all we can feel in the end are the swirls and ripples of colour seeping through our closed eyelids, drenched in sunlight.

<sup>06</sup> Statement by Olivier Debré dated May 1977 and reproduced in *Aspects de la peinture en France de 1950 à 1980* (exhibition catalogue), Montauban, musée Ingres, 1985, p.23.

« le ciel est comble, et s'ouvre encore <sup>07</sup> »

by claire chesnier

"the sky is full, and opening again", text by the artist regarding her new installation for the CCC OD

In this installation of images and light, painterly and scientific elements come together. Both are linked to the sensory experience of seeing, influenced by the variations in light that shape our perception of a work of art and its surroundings.

Paintings have a tactile surface that responds to changes in natural light throughout the day, revealing subtle variations in hue. As engineers at the start-up Olumee<sup>08</sup>, Arnaud Lejeune, Guillaume Lejeune and Jean-Yves Moulin have developed an innovative lighting system that uses sensors to reproduce the sky's fluctuating temperature and color intensity in real time.

The concept was born from a dream—the dream of immersing the viewer in the contemplative experience of painting, of transferring the everchanging aspects of the sky, the passage of human time and the evolving mood of a day, from sunrise to sunset, onto the painted surface, and of extending this experience onto the viewer's own skin.

Because the sky is always around us, it touches our bodies and we are in it. The air changes and with it the luminosity of our skin, the color of our eyes, our perception of the present moment. So the same

work of art would reflect the vast expanse of shadow under a cloudy sky or the fiery glow of the midday sun in August. I wanted to evoke the temporality of the gaze, of the creation of the painting, of the old masters working in dusky chapels or by candlelight, of stained glass or domestic windows. Let each hour, each moment of this journey become movement, become life. In « *Le Ciel est comble, et s'ouvre encore* » (*The Sky is full, and opening again*), the light gradations of twelve hours of the day condense into twelve minutes, like an ephemeris.

The modulations of light intensity and temperature were conceived as a tableau, moving from the slow rise of dawn to sudden showers, passing clouds and nightfall in relation to the viewer and the paintings themselves. The weather and the passage of time shape our observation of the surface of the painting as it pulsates and transforms.

Painting is about touch, about touching and being touched. I hope that this installation opens up the possibility of a sensitive approach to a time that mirrors the sky, which is no longer just above our heads, but in and before our eyes, embedded in the passing veils of color.

07 The title of the installation is a quotation from André du Bouchet, taken from his very short poem "The Uninhabited" ("L'Inhabité") published in 1968 as part of the collection *Ou le soleil*: "We pause, for the view, in the wind that doesn't wane in the distance, on the upright rock / Our support sways. The sky is full, and opening again." (re-edited in André du Bouchet, *Dans la chaleur vacante followed by Ou le soleil*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991, p.131).

Concerning Claire Chesnier's work, it is interesting to note that du Bouchet used to write standing up, gesturally so to speak, tracing his very short poems on the surface of large panels almost the size of his body. The text written by Claire Chesnier and reproduced here is taken from: David Desrimais and Jean-Charles Vergne (eds.), *Claire Chesnier*, Paris, JBE Books, 2024, pp.162-163.

08 **Olumee**, a French startup, reproduces in real-time and in high-fidelity the variations of natural light. She brings to life the work of Claire Chesnier at the rhythm of a day, translating light into emotions. **Barrisol** deploys its eco-designed, low carbon canvases to diffuse a soft light.

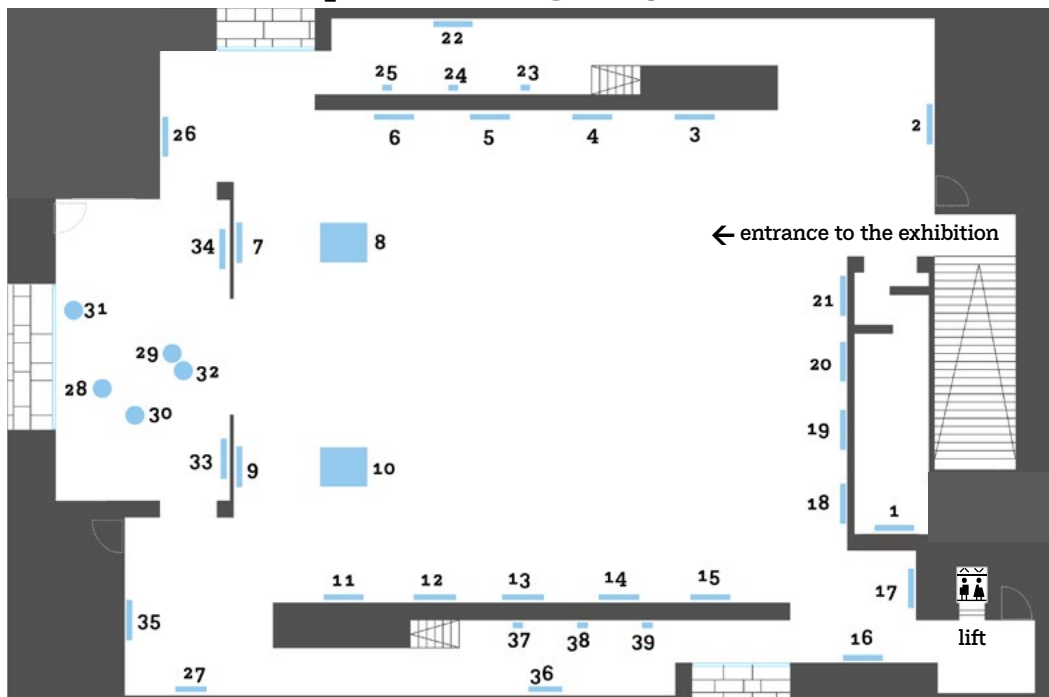
# OLUMEE

Lumière vivante haute-fidélité

 **BARRISOL®**

exhibition  
plan →

# exhibition floor plan (white gallery 1<sup>st</sup> floor)



- 1** *Le Ciel est comble, et s'ouvre encore*  
 2025, installation produced with Olumee and the support of Barrisol - coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours  
**220521**  
 2021, ink on paper, private collection
- 2** **111024**  
 2024, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 3** **030423**  
 2023, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 4** **300323**  
 2023, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 5** **130323**  
 2023, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 6** **130424**  
 2024, ink on paper
- 7** **130623**  
 2023, ink on paper
- 8** **040221**  
 2021, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 9** **030623**  
 2023, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 10** **070319**  
 2019, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 11** **160225**  
 2025, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 12** **150824**  
 2024, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours
- 13** **210624**  
 2024, ink on paper  
 coproduction of the artist and the CCCOD, Tours

- 14** 151124  
2024, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 15** 131124  
2024, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 16** 020423  
2023, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 17** 131024  
2024, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 18** 231024  
2024, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 19** 211024  
2024, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 20** 030325  
2025, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 21** 130125  
2025, ink on paper,  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 22** CCCXIV  
2016, ink on paper
- 23** 041221  
2021, coloured pencil on paper
- 24** 011221  
2021, coloured pencil on paper
- 25** 051221  
2021, coloured pencil on paper
- 26** 010323  
2023, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 27** 240122  
2022, ink on paper
- 28** 140619  
2019, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 29** 130619  
2019, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 30** 200319  
2019, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 31** 190319  
2019, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 32** 200118  
2018, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 33** 270122  
2022, ink on paper
- 34** 070222  
2022, ink on paper  
Private collection
- 35** 270424  
2024, ink on paper
- 36** CLXVI  
2012, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 37** 800.6  
2011, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 38** 778.2  
2012, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours
- 39** 782.5  
2011, ink on paper  
coproduction of the artist and the CCC OD, Tours

*Unless otherwise stated, all works are  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Gallery Ceysson & Bénétière.*

## the works in the exhibition

In the white gallery, the artist unfolds more than a decade of her pictorial evolution. The intention is not retrospective; on the contrary.

Alongside many of her most recent works, a few older pieces are simply punctuation marks settling the path. As witnesses they tell the story of a practice that was built in a sedimentary, almost archaeological way. It is about revealing the narrative that shapes the internal structure of her work, a narration we read almost genealogically when the word “families” resonates in our memory, alternative terminology to «series», preferred by the artist when she refers to her production.

With the forms inscribed on a white background, dated 2011-2012, we understand that Claire Chesnier’s research is initially articulated from a reflection on the composition and on the antagonism between form and colour, which will mark a large part of the history of painting.

Now these forms, so well nicknamed “slides”, are like cross sections made in the heart of color - of the shape-color -, in its inner core that could not otherwise be touched by light.

We can also feel the artist’s interest in a certain history of minimalism, as these first paintings invoke the sculptural object, questioning Donald Judd’s *Specific objects* (1928-1994) or the *Ultimate paintings* by Ad Reinhardt (1913-1967). More recently, Claire Chesnier interrogates and reactivates her own work, sometimes dropping of the painting horizontally, on a pedestal, or winding on itself to raise it as a column.

Going back in time, the history of painting’s time, these limited areas of color soon expand to occupy the entire support. From 2016, colour is no longer circumscribed by invisible borders but, like a “veil”, now saturates the entire surface of firmly vertical formats.

If the reference to Postwar international abstraction is evident in the 2018-2019 works – we think of Mark Rothko (1903-1970) and even more of Morris Louis (1912-1962) -, the very diffuse way in which the colour spreads is also reminiscent of how light is revealed on photographic paper.

In 2019, the “thresholds”, indetermined horizons, maintain those references to asbtraction, but also remind us in an obvious way to the pictorial tradition of landscape.

Finally, the clouds of 2025, sudden and vaporous apparitions, celebrate the landscape, emerging as the fictional details of ancient paintings: a Constable sky (1776-1837) or a Chardin background (1699-1779). The framing is here unequivocally affirmed by Claire Chesnier who practices a radical square format cutting – or almost -, as we catch a portion of the sky into a polaroid.

# claire chesnier

## bio- graphy

born in 1986 in Clermont-Ferrand, lives and works in Paris, (France), represented by the gallery Ceysson & Bénétière, Paris, France

Claire Chesnier first meets art through music and writing she practices very early. She devotes nearly twenty years to classical and contemporary dance.

Painting, which she had been practicing since the beginning, was the decisive encounter experienced as an enlargement of the writing gesture and the incarnation of an extended dance gesture. Her commitment to painting is turned towards a physical and poetic relationship to the world, of apprehension of touch, and of the sensitive embrace of things, of life. For her, "painting is a story of touch, of how to touch and be touched. She arrives where words fail by tactility and rhythm".

She began her education at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, where she worked in the studio of painter Jean-Michel Alberola and where her research was followed by the philosopher Alain Bonfand. She obtained her National Diploma of Fine Arts and her PhD in Arts and Art Sciences. She was quickly noticed by the stylist Agnès b. who awarded her the Prix des Amis des Beaux-Arts in 2011 and made her join his gallery, the Galerie du jour agnès b. where they will collaborate from 2012 to 2017. This is followed by a collaboration with the ETC Gallery in Paris from 2018 to 2022. Claire Chesnier wins several awards such as the Prix Talents Contemporains of the Fondation François Schneider, the Prix Art Collector, the Prix Fénéon of the Chancellery of the Universities of Paris and the Yishu 8 Prize of the Maison des Arts in Beijing where she studies the ancient painters that she looks at as much as the stones and mists that characterize them.

*(source : galerie Ceysson & Bénétière)*



## reading tips

### > the bibliography of claire chesnier

\* André du Bouchet, *Dans la chaleur vacante suivi de Ou le soleil*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991 [1968]

\* Jean Giono, *Un roi sans divertissement*, Paris, Gallimard, 1948

\* Ingrid Jonker, *De fumée et d'ocre et Soleil incliné*, Paris, éditions La Barque, 2020 [1963 & 1966]

Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, Métailié, 1992 [épuisé]

\* Fernando Pessoa, *Le Livre de l'intranquillité*, Paris, Christian Bourgeois éditeur, 1999 [1935/1982]

\* Virginia Woolf, *Les Vagues*, s.l., Le Bruit du temps, 2020, traduction de Cécile Wajsbrot [1931 / première édition française : Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1993]

### > the bibliography of the curatorship

\* Claire Bernardi (dir.), *Dans le flou. Une autre vision de l'art de 1945 à nos jours* (catalogue d'exposition collective), Paris, musée de l'Orangerie, 2025

\* Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, *Incarner une abstraction*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2020

\* David Desrimais et Jean-Charles Vergne (éd.), *Claire Chesnier*, Paris, JBE Books, 2024

Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966

\* André Gide, *Les Nourritures terrestres*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971 [1897]

David Lapoujade, *Les Existences moindres*, Paris, Minuit, 2017

Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, *L'Extase matérielle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1967

\* Laurine Roux, *Une immense sensation de calme*, Paris, Gallimard, 2018  
Étienne Souriau, *Les Différents modes d'existence*, Paris, PUF, 2009 [1943]

\* Jean-Charles Vergne (commissariat), *Beautés* (catalogue d'exposition collective), Frac Auvergne, 2023

*\* books available  
in the CCCOD bookshop*

## events

### › encounter with Claire Chesnier

Saturday 7 June 2025 at 3 pm

duration 1h30 | white gallery

subject to the purchase of an admission ticket | free access

CCCOD LE PASS

### › Fiume - polyphonic sacred chant concert

Sunday 29 June 2025 at 4.30 pm

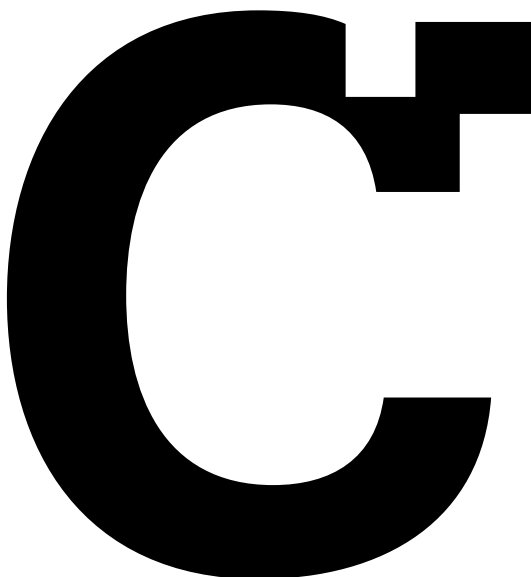
duration 1h | white gallery

subject to the purchase of an admission ticket | free access

CCCOD LE PASS

## tours

- > guided in French (all year round)  
every Saturday and Sunday, 4:30 pm (1 hour)
- > flash visits in english (during summer)  
Wednesday and Saturday at 11:30 am (15 min.)



## access

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contact@cccod.fr

## opening

Wednesday to Sunday  
11:00 am to 6:00 pm  
Saturday until 7:00 pm



[www.cccod.fr](http://www.cccod.fr)