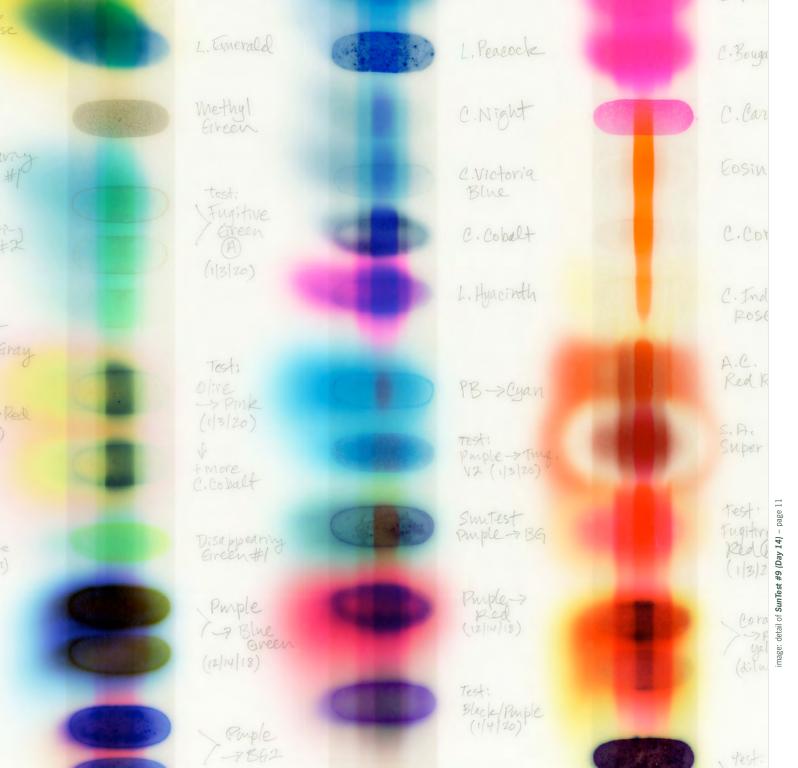


Jaq Chartier SunTests

essay Bruce Guenther



Beauty was the agency that caused visual pleasure in the viewer.

– Dave Hickey¹

With infinite patience and a sybaritic eye, Jaq Chartier unites scientific structure with an alchemist's skill, distilling a beauty that engages intellectually and seduces emotionally through the power of color. She garnered national attention for her ongoing *Testing* paintings, begun in the late 1990s, based on the artist's research into the permanency of acrylic paints, dyes, and colored inks on various grounds. In these works, Chartier embraces chance and the seemingly accidental to make poetic compositions based in pattern geometry and the ever-evolving dispersion of stains and dyes through porous top-coats of spray paint and acrylic resin. Within an artist-created painting structure, these unanticipated post-studio events transform the material. Dyes migrating and spreading over and through the layers of Chartier's matte surfaces create mysterious, scrim-like effects that memorably contribute to the *Testing* works' hovering, dreamy beauty. The resulting paintings—built from dots, dashes, grids, and intersecting lines forming phantom plaids—are rich in optical discoveries.

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In her recent SunTests series. Chartier has moved color to the fore and introduced an exciting new scale and working process, a fusion of idea, system, and unnamable chromatic beauty. She has reopened the files of her earlier ink and dye research to pick up and investigate the impermanent dyes she previously rejected—in effect, to visit the paths not taken in search of fresh palettes and new inspiration. The discovery of unexplored, lusciously saturated fugitive colors and their pale tertiary residues at the end of the fading cycle inspired her to redraft the rules that guide her painting in the *Testing* series. Adopting new systemic and process-driven parameters. Chartier has elevated the emotional potential and impact of color to new heights while creating some of the largest and most beautiful works of her career.

After selecting a set of fugitive dyes and stains from her research notations and conducting some fresh experimentation, Chartier plots a new work on a prepared panel using a series of vertical columns—often two or three per panel—

of roughly equidistant, horizontal strokes of fluid dye drawn with eyedroppers. With rhythmic color structures reminiscent of Fibonacci sequences, the dyes begin to do something else, diffusing into subsequent films of paint and resin, spreading haloing color between Chartier's marks. Ultimately, the artist's intuitive, emotional response to color informs the palette she selects. She then creates the chromatic sequences of simple forms in columns and grids that define the shallow spatial field of the work. Once the density of marks and the composition is right, Chartier may mask the vertical columns with strips of



hoto courtesy of Jordan Steward/Vulcan Inc.

paper to electively stop fading of the original source color. Relinquishing her agency, she places the panel in the window of her studio to begin its journey from solid color to residual memory.

Unlike the *Testing* paintings, each *SunTest* panel is the source matrix for a larger, more complex work composed from the panel's various stages of degradation in the sun and heat of the window. Chartier rigorously records the surface of her matrix panel daily—or hourly, if the speed of the dye's fugitive nature requires it—until the color on the panel has disappeared. The resulting high-density digital image files then become the fuel—as both palette and image, substance and subject—for the creation of the artist's new editioned, dye-transfer sublimation works. In this process, the original matrix panel becomes an artifact, a ghost only accessible through the daily digital images of its transitional history.

In an act of discovery, Chartier selects and assembles compelling combinations of intervals from across the fading process. These composite compositions maximize the images' potential to be systemically revealing and emotionally evocative. The varied compositions in the *SunTests* series are fixed palimpsests of change that reveal the beauty and surprise, the poetry of transformation and loss, with color. The works may be conceived as a single panel of several day intervals organized in a line or grid, multiple individual panels presenting a sequence of single-day intervals in a wall formation, or a multipanel work of a single detail isolated within the matrix and harvested in different stages from across the digital files. Chartier converts the final composition into a color-balanced digital file for dye-sublimation or dye-diffusion computer printing. This process uses color dyes that are heat-set transferred onto specially coated ChromaLuxe aluminum panels. Ideal for Chartier's art, dye-sublimation printing offers true continuous tones with vibrant, non-yellowing color resolution that will not fade in indirect sunlight.

In their extended format and visually rich complexity, her elegant digital works emerge as derivations of the paintings' stacked-column-of-marks form—

reordered and reinvented by the artist in fadeinterval units. These complex compositions invite
the viewer's eyes to dart from column to column
(as if observing time-lapse photography in motion)
in order to understand the evolution of a specific
color passage. The dye-diffusion process has
enabled Chartier to expand the scale, both physical and chronological, of her work significantly.
Intriguingly, this presents possibilities for her work
to envelop the viewer in wall-filling mural celebrations of the pulse-quickening optical intensity of
her saturated color.

Declaring the singular importance of color in her work, both in print and in practice, Chartier works at the intersection of twentieth-century theories of color, her personal research into the chemistry of color media, and the formal structures that affect a color's impact in painting. From my conversations with the artist and study of her paintings, it is clear that a central intellectual influence comprises the two poles of Modernist color theory: Wassily Kandinsky's pioneering discussion, in *Point and Line to Plane* (1926), of

the relationship of color and music and emotional states; and the analytic distance of Josef Albers, who advocated for direct observation of color's behavior in different situations and defined the ramifications of color combinations in his landmark tome. *Interaction of Color* (1963). Chartier is the fulcrum in balancing the systematic, Alberslike rigor of her process with the unpredictable emotional strings of color. Chartier also acknowledges the influence of Clement Greenberg's arguments exalting color and process as the ultimate expression of abstraction, in his writings on Post-Painterly Abstraction (né Color Field painting) in the mid-1960s. She further cites the influence in her practice of Minimalist sculptor Donald Judd's writings on the systematic and intuitive dialogue of form, serial repetition, and material integrity.

In Chartier's work, color is liberated from any objective context save for itself; color describes nothing and is the singular subject of the brilliant *SunTests*, with their often-breathtaking chromatic force. The viewer experiences color in the simultaneity of change. The multiple intervals marking



 1 Dave Hickey, *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty* (Los Angeles: Art issues. Press, The Foundation for Advanced Critical Studies, 1993), 11.

Art historian and independent curator, Bruce Guenther is currently serving as Adjunct Curator of Special Exhibitions for the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, Portland.

A specialist in post-war American and European Art, Guenther was the Chief Curator and Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Portland Art Museum, Oregon, until his retirement in 2014. Previously he was the Chief Curator of the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, California, and of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois; and Curator of Contemporary Art and the head of the Modern Art Program at the Seattle Art Museum. He has curated numerous major monographic and thematic exhibitions internationally, and authored numerous books and exhibition catalogues.

Most recently he provided the overview essays for <u>PAPER: Charles Arnoldi</u> (Radius Books, 2017), <u>Michael C. Spafford: Epic Works</u> (Lucia Marquand, 2018), and <u>Roland Petersen: Works on Paper 1956 - 2005</u> (The Studio Shop, LP, 2019).

the evolution of a core matrix, altered by light and time, reveal the secret hues of chromatically distinct chemical agglomerations that produced the initial visible color.

A contemporary sibyl of color, Chartier crafts light-bleached progressions that peel back the secrets of a hue to trigger new impulses and associations. Having released herself to its joys, she creates places where color coalesces and collapses under the force of painting or sunlight, giving up its secrets just as a prism sends light's rainbow-secret dancing across a wall. Through her alchemical science and formal rigor. Chartier resurrects and immortalizes luscious, saturated color's fugitive descent through all its incremental hues and tones until there is but a shadow's edge on the painting's surface. In Chartier's *SunTests*, we too may discover in the work's fibrillating optical energy a wordless, visceral space between rationality and intuition, pure color and spirituality.

Bruce Guenther March 2021



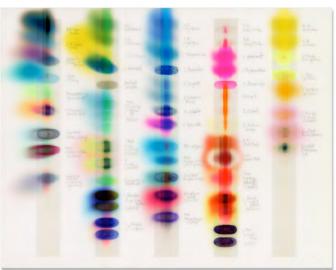
SunTest #9 (Day 1, 9, 14, 25), 2020 time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 33 x 42 inches each panel, edition of 3

previous page: exhibition installation at Robischon Gallery, Denver, (May 2019) image courtesy of Robischon Gallery, Denver

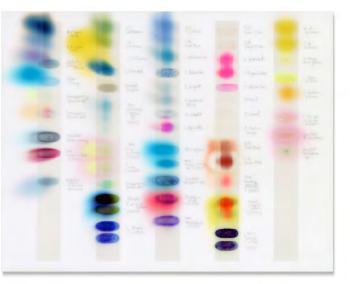
left: **SunTest #6 (Day 1, 6, 59)**, 2019 time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 37 x 37 inches each panel, edition of 3

right: **SunTest #1 (6 Intervals)**, 2019 assembled time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 31 x 65 inches, edition of 3



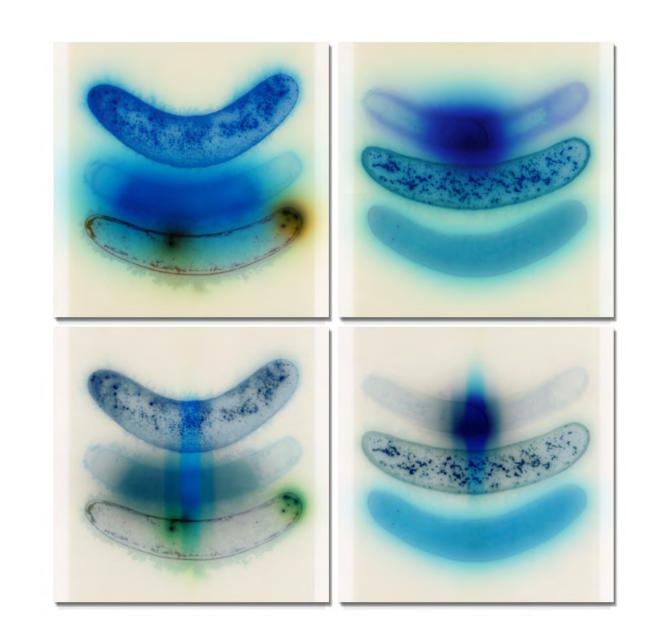




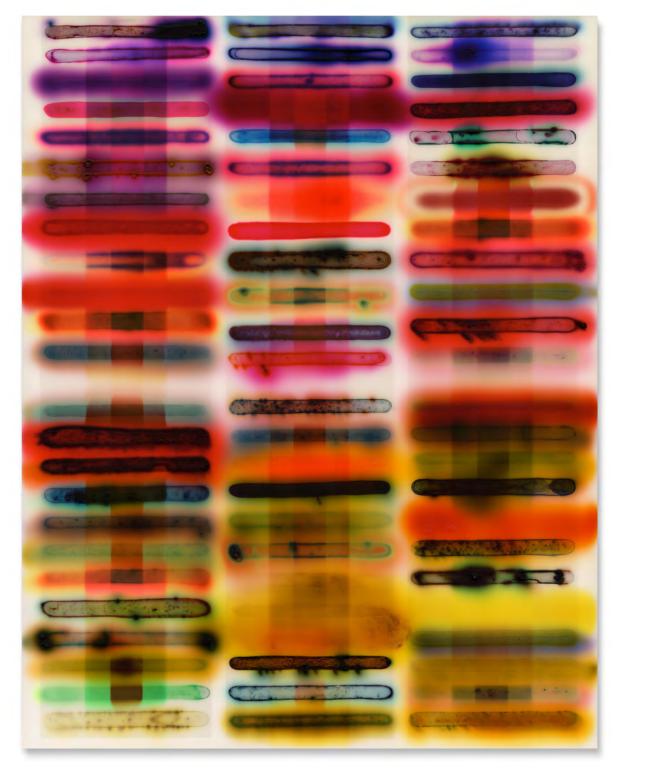




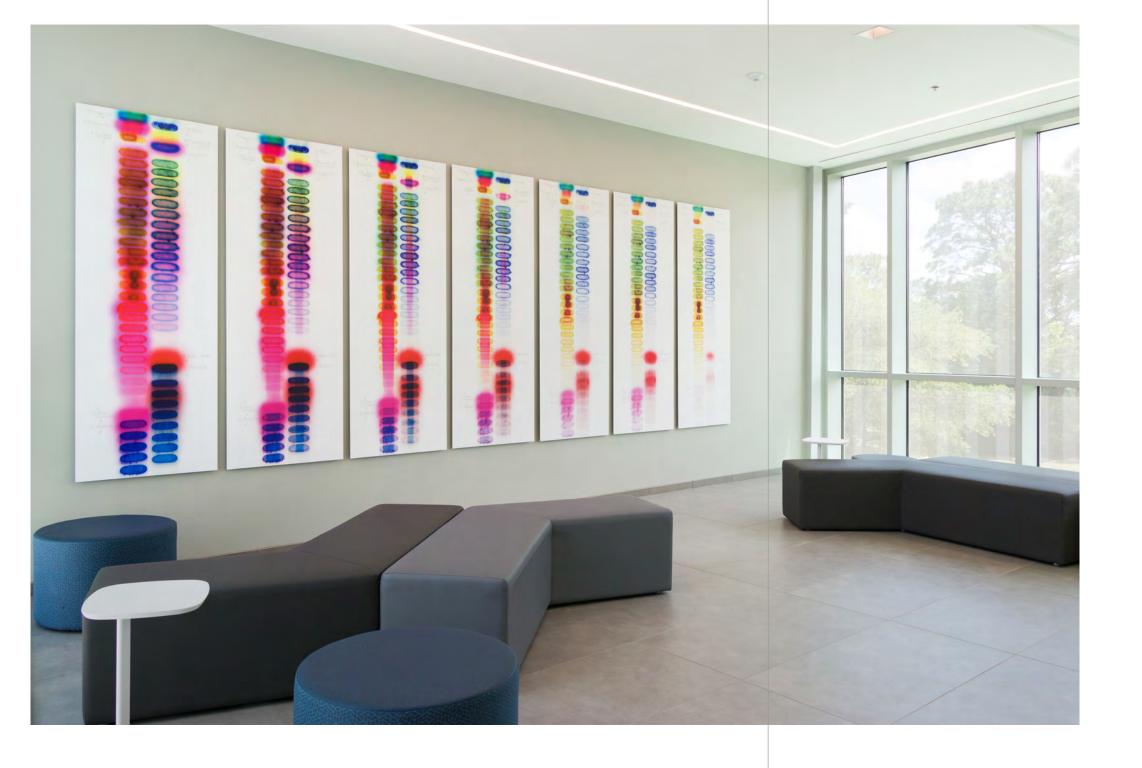




Day 1 and Day 10 (Blues), 2021 time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 24 x 24 inches per panel, edition of 9







SunTest #3 (7 Moments), 2019

time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 83 x 31 inches per panel, 83" x 19' 5" overall commissioned for Lab Sciences Annex, University of West Florida, Pensacola (photo Richard Rodriquez)

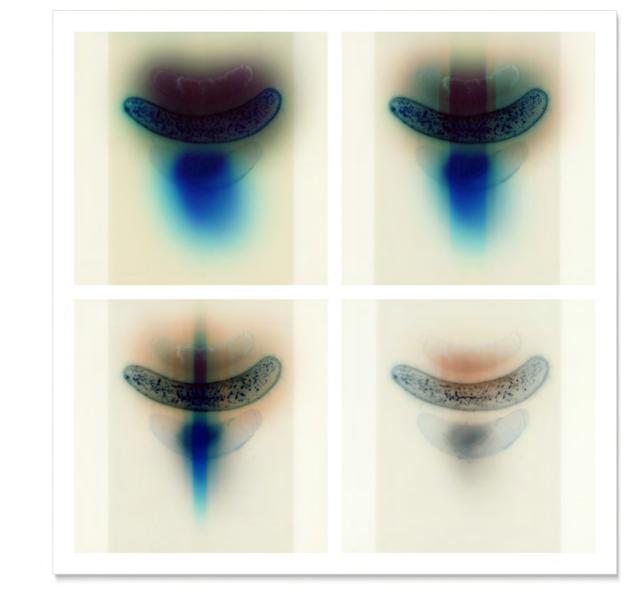
previous page:

SunTest #16 (Day 9 & 131), 2021

time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 42 x 33 inches each panel, edition of 3





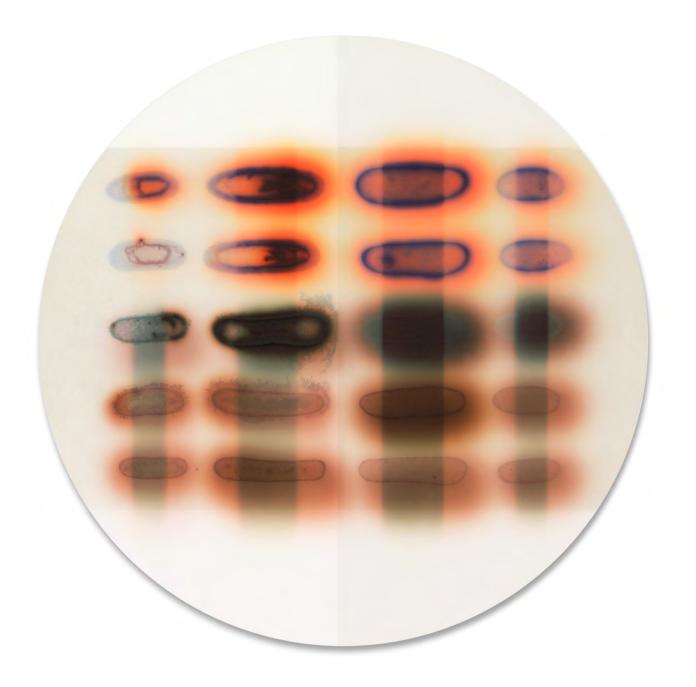


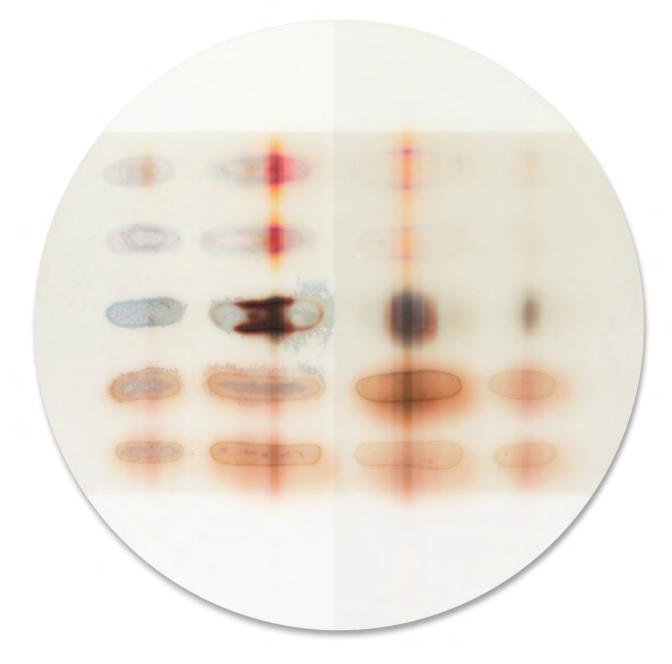
SunTest #13-2d (Day 1, 4, 10, 47), 2020 assembled time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 37 x 37 inches, edition of 9

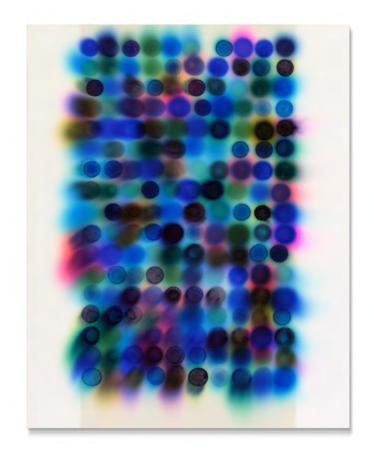
previous page: exhibition installation at Elizabeth Leach Gallery, May, 2020 (photo Mario Gallucci, courtesy of Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR)

left: **SunTest #11 (Day 1, 12, 16, 19)**, 2020 time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 37 x 37 inches each panel, edition of 3

right: **SunTest #12 (Day 5 & 11)**, 2020 assembled time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 42 x 33 inches each panel, edition of 3









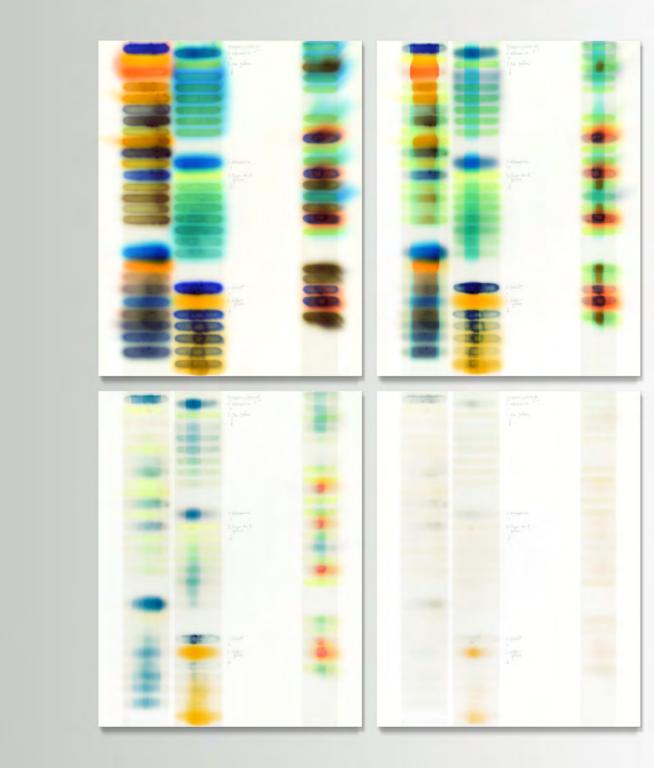
SunTest #10 (Day 1 & 38), 2020

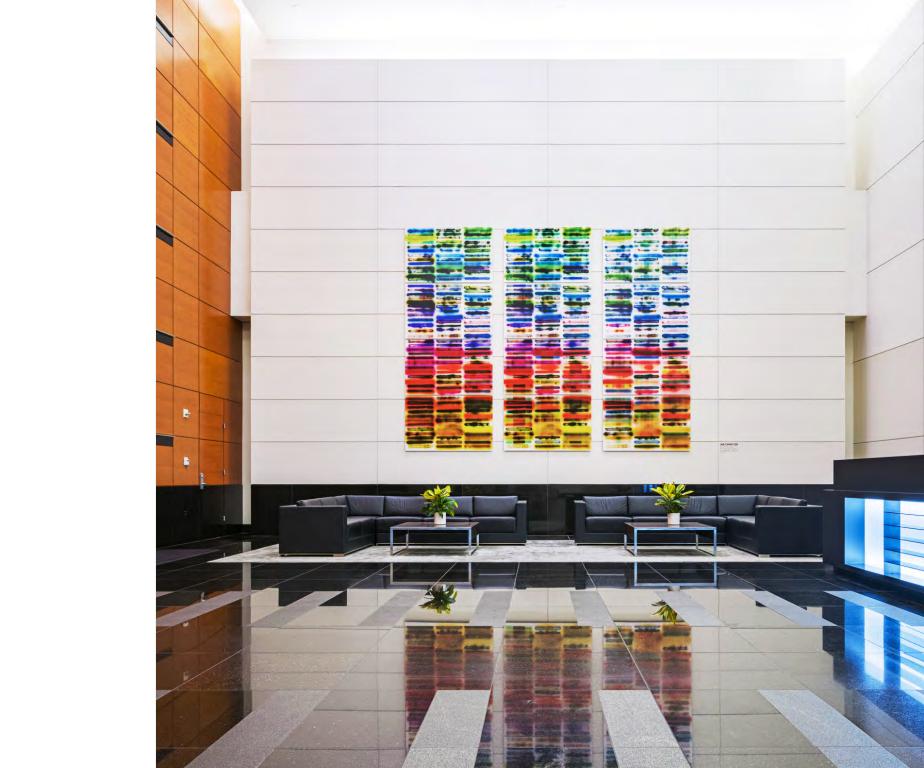
time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 20 x 16 inches each panel, edition of 10

previous page:

SunTest #19 (Day 6 & 62), 2021

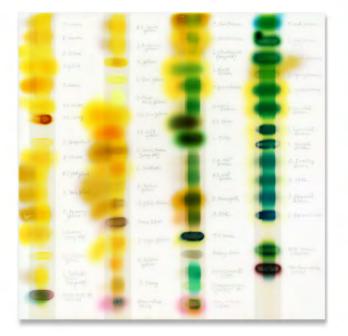
time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 24 inches diameter each panel, edition of 3

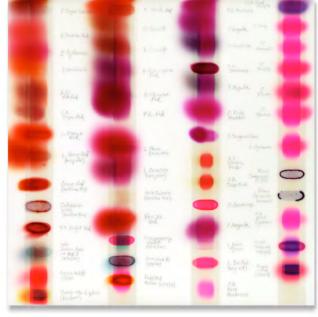


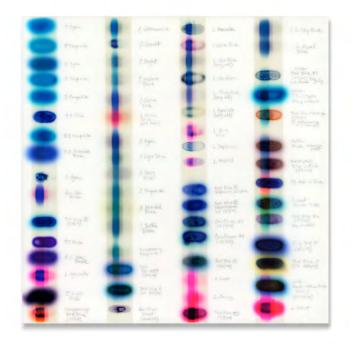


Giant SunTest, 2020

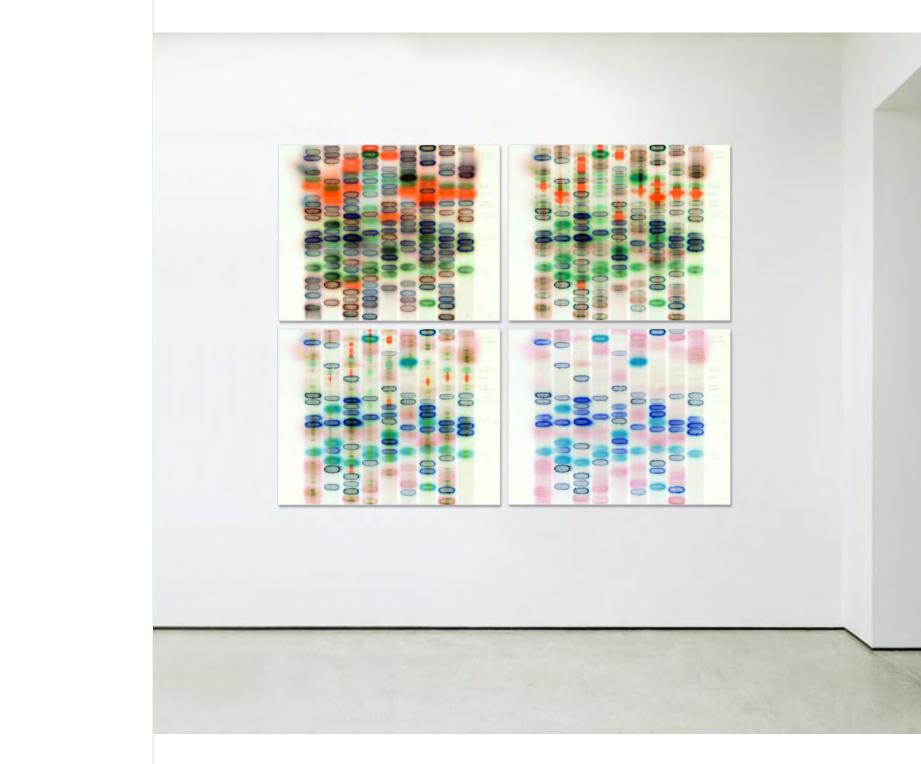
time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 13×17 feet, installed in the Fox Tower lobby, downtown Portland, OR (photo Mario Gallucci, courtesy of Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR)

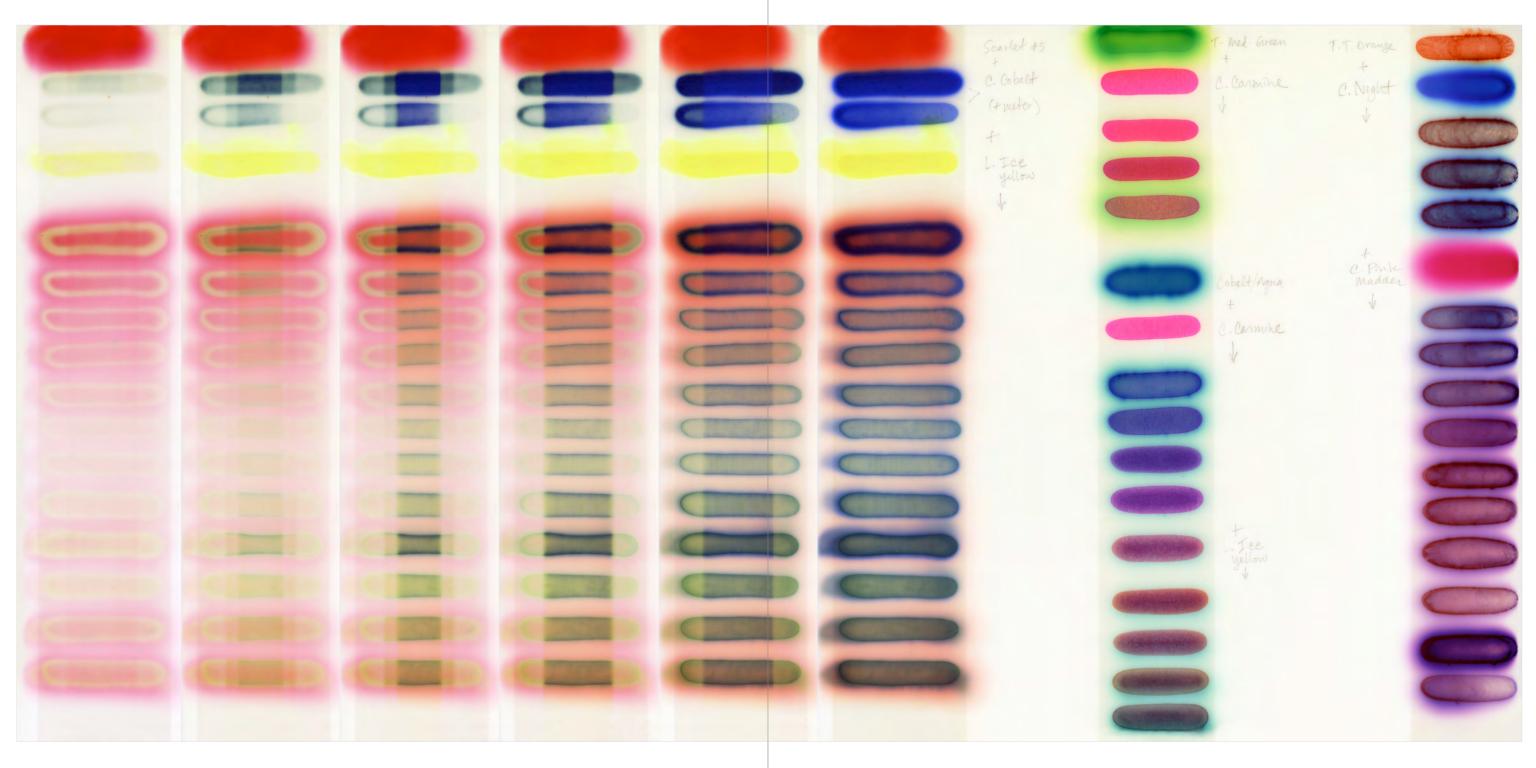


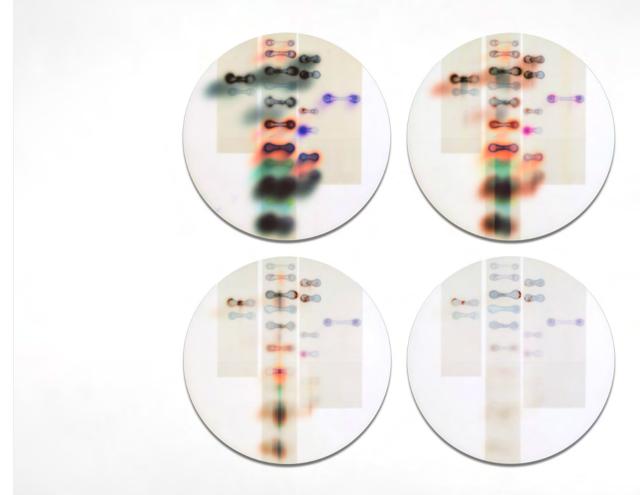












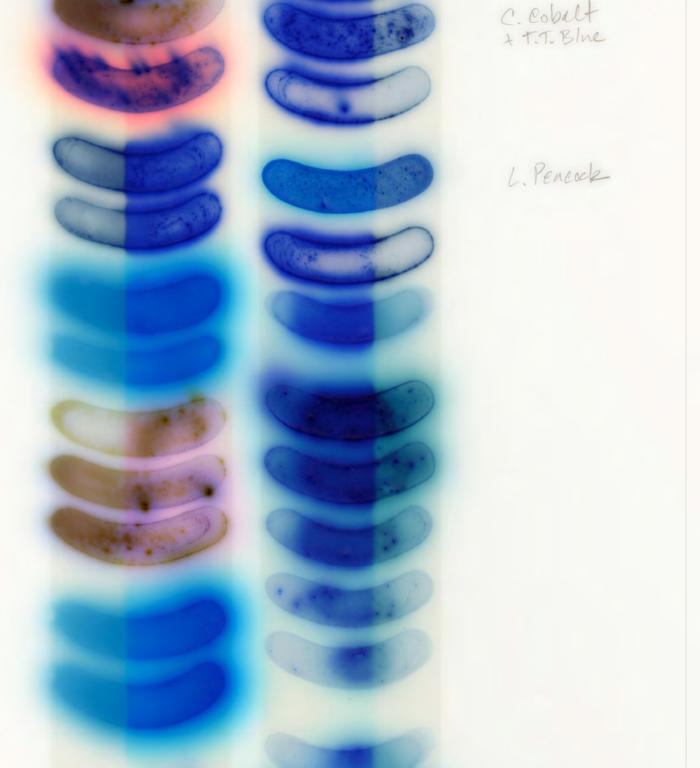
SunTest #17 (Day 1, 11, 40, 160), 2021

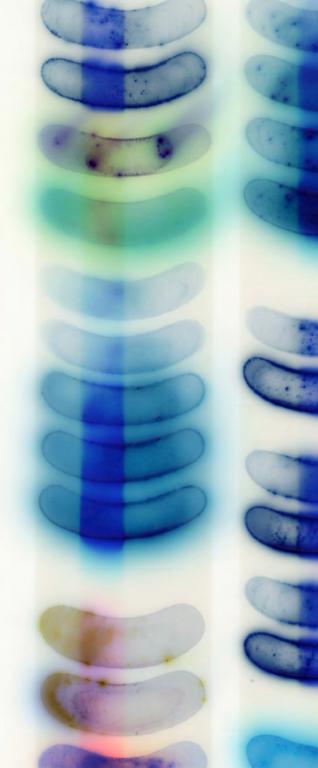
time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 24 inches diameter each panel, edition of 3

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SunTest #1 (6 Intervals), 2019

assembled time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum $31\,x\,65$ inches, edition of 3





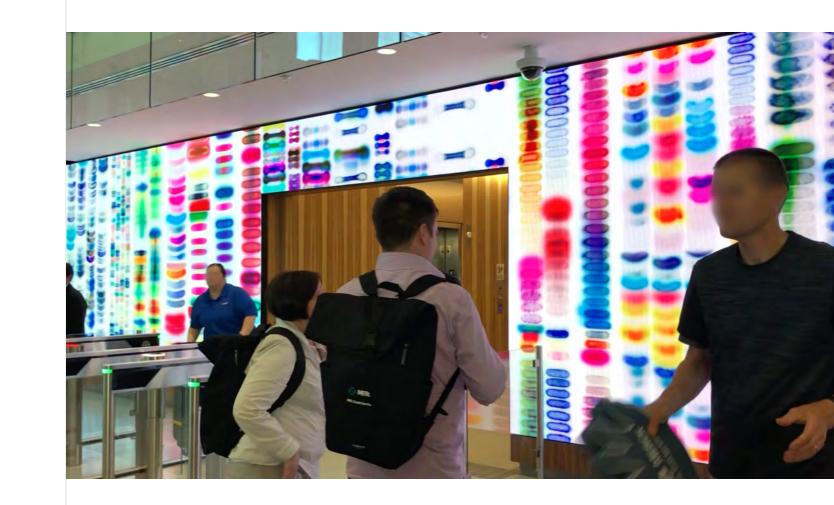
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SunTest #7 (Day 1, 2, 4, 10, 52), 2019

time-based image capture, dye sublimation on aluminum 42 x 33 inches each panel, edition of 3 (photo courtesy of Robischon Gallery, Denver)

previous page: detail of SunTest #7 (Day 4)



SunTests Time-Lapse, 2019

animated time-lapse video for LED media wall, made in collaboration with Core Studio, Half Moon Bay, CA approximately 9 x 30 feet, installed in the lobby of Merck Research Laboratories, South San Francisco Visit my instagram page to see the video in motion. (photo courtesy of Core Studio)

Jaq Chartier

Education

MFA, painting, University of Washington, Seattle
 BFA, painting (Cum Laude), University of Massachusetts, Amherst
 Syracuse University, School of Art (film) Syracuse, New York

Solo Exhibitions

- 2021 Under the Sun, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco
- 2020 SunTests, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR
- 2019 SunTests, Robischon Gallery, Denver
- 2018 In Solution, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco
- 2016 Hunting Color, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR
- 2015 A Fever in Matter, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco
- 2014 Testing, Base Gallery, Tokyo
- 2013 Ultra Marine: New Paintings & Drawings About the Sea, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR SubOptic, Platform Gallery, Seattle
- 2011 Slow Color, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York
- 2010 SuperNatural, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR
- 2009 Downtime, Platform Gallery, Seattle
- 2008 Color Charts, Haines Gallery, San Francisco
 Full Spectrum, Elizabeth Leach, Portland, OR
 Testing, William Baczek Fine Arts, Northampton, MA
- 2007 Color Tests, Schroeder Romero, New York
- 2006 Testing, University of Michigan, Inst. for the Humanities, Ann Arbor Blindsight, Platform Gallery, Seattle
- 2005 Testing, Elizabeth Leach, Portland, OR Testing, LIMN Gallery, San Francisco
- 2004 Testing, Schroeder Romero, Brooklyn, NY Testing, LIMN Gallery. San Francisco
- 2003 Testing, Schroeder Romero, Brooklyn, NY New Work, William Traver Gallery, Tacoma, WA
- 2002 Testing, Frumkin/Duval, Santa Monica, CA Testing, LIMN Gallery, San Francisco Testing, Cervini Haas, Scottsdale, AZ
- 2001 Testing, William Traver Gallery, Seattle
- 2000 Testing, Cervini Haas, Scottsdale, AZ
- 1998 Testing, William Traver Gallery, Seattle
- 1997 New Work, Laura Russo, Portland, OR
- 1996 New Work, William Traver Gallery, Seattle
- 1995 Introductions, William Traver Gallery, Seattle

Selected Awards & Grants

- 2013 Purchase Award, Seattle Public Utilities Portable Works Collection
- 2011 Contemporary Northwest Art Awards finalist, Portland Art Museum, OR
- 2009 Purchase Award, City of Seattle Portable Works Collection
- 2006 Neddy Fellowship Award nominee, Behnke Foundation, Seattle
- 2005 Neddy Fellowship Award nominee, Behnke Foundation, Seattle
- 2004 Special Projects Grant, 4Culture, Seattle
 Visual Arts Grant finalist, Creative Capital Foundation, New York
- 2002 Artist Trust/WA State Arts Commission Fellowship, Seattle
- 2001 Betty Bowen PONCHO Special Recognition Award, Seattle Art Museum Joan Mitchell Foundation Award nominee, New York
- 1999 Artist Trust GAP Grant (Grants for Artists' Projects), Seattle
 Betty Bowen Award Finalist, Seattle Art Museum
 Centrum Residency, Port Townsend, WA
 Neddy Fellowship Award nominee, Behnke Foundation, Seattle

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2021 Wunderkammer 3, Esbjerg Art Museum, Esbjerg, Denmark
- 2020 Making a Better Painting: Thinking Through Practice, Hoffman Gallery, Lewis & Clark College, Portland, OR
- 2019 Metamorphosis: Agents of Change, NYU Langone Art Gallery, New York
- 2018 Making Life Visible: Art, Biology and Visualization, Faulconer Gallery, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA
- 2015 Diphthong, Shirley Fiterman Art Center of BMCC, New York Thought Patterns, Bainbridge Island Museum of Art, Bainbridge Island, WA
- 2013 Chamber Music, Frye Art Museum, Seattle
- 2011 One Thing Leads To Another, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art Seattle As Collector, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle
- 2009 Genipulation: Genetic Engineering & Manipulation in Contemporary Art, CentrePasqueArt, Kunsthaus Centre d'art, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland
- 2008 Genesis The Art of Creation, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland
- 2007 Diagnose [Art]: Contemporary Art Reflecting Medicine, Museum im Kulturspeicher, Würzburg, Germany [catalog]
 - Human Nature II: Future Worlds, School of Fine Arts Gallery, Indiana University, Bloomington [catalog]
- 2006 Diagnosis [Art]: Contemporary Art Reflecting Medicine, Kunst Museum Ahlen, Germany; and the Museum im Kulturspeicher, Wurzburg, Germany [catalog]
- 2002 Gene(sis): Contemporary Art Explores Human Genomics, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. The show travelled through 2004: Berkeley Art Museum, UC Berkeley; Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; and the Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

Selected Collections

The Allen Institute Bill & Melinda Gates Research Institute Capital One Chan Zuckerberg Initiative City of Seattle, Portable Works Collection Google Cloud Collection Merck, South San Francisco Microsoft Collection Oregon State University, Corvallis The Progressive Art Collection Charles Schwab, San Francisco Schwartz Art Collection, Harvard Business School Seattle Public Utilities. Portable Works Collection Swedish Medical Center, Seattle Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, WA University of West Florida

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- 2013 Langner, Erin. "Disappearing Act: Jaq Chartier's Climate-Changing Paintings," **New American Paintings Blog**, Sept 30.
 - Weibel, Peter, and Ljiljana Fruk (eds.). **Molecular Aesthetics**. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, (images).
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- 2009 Genipulation, exhibition catalog, CentrePasqueArt, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland, pp. 54-59, (image).
 - Reichle, Ingeborg. Art in the Age of Technoscience: Genetic Engineering, Robotics, and Artificial Life in Contemporary Art,

 Austria: Springer Wien New York. pp. 237-241, (images).
- 2008 Genesis-The Art of Creation, catalog, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Switzerland. Speer, Richard. "Profile: Jaq Chartier," art Itd, Sept, (image).
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 - Graves, Jen. "Profanity, Testing, Explosion," The Stranger, Sept 14.
 - Hackett, Regina. "Jaq Chartier breaks down decay to its most beautiful elemental forms," **Seattle P.I.**, Sept 8, p. 29, (image).
 - Pence, Elizabeth. "Jaq Chartier at Platform Gallery," **Artweek**, Nov, pp. 22-23 (image).
 - Scott, Carrie E. A. "State of the Art," **Seattle Magazine**, June, p. 123-124, (image).
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- 2005 Koplos, Janet. "Report from Seattle: Plugged In and Caffeinated," Art in America, Sept, p.69, (image).
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