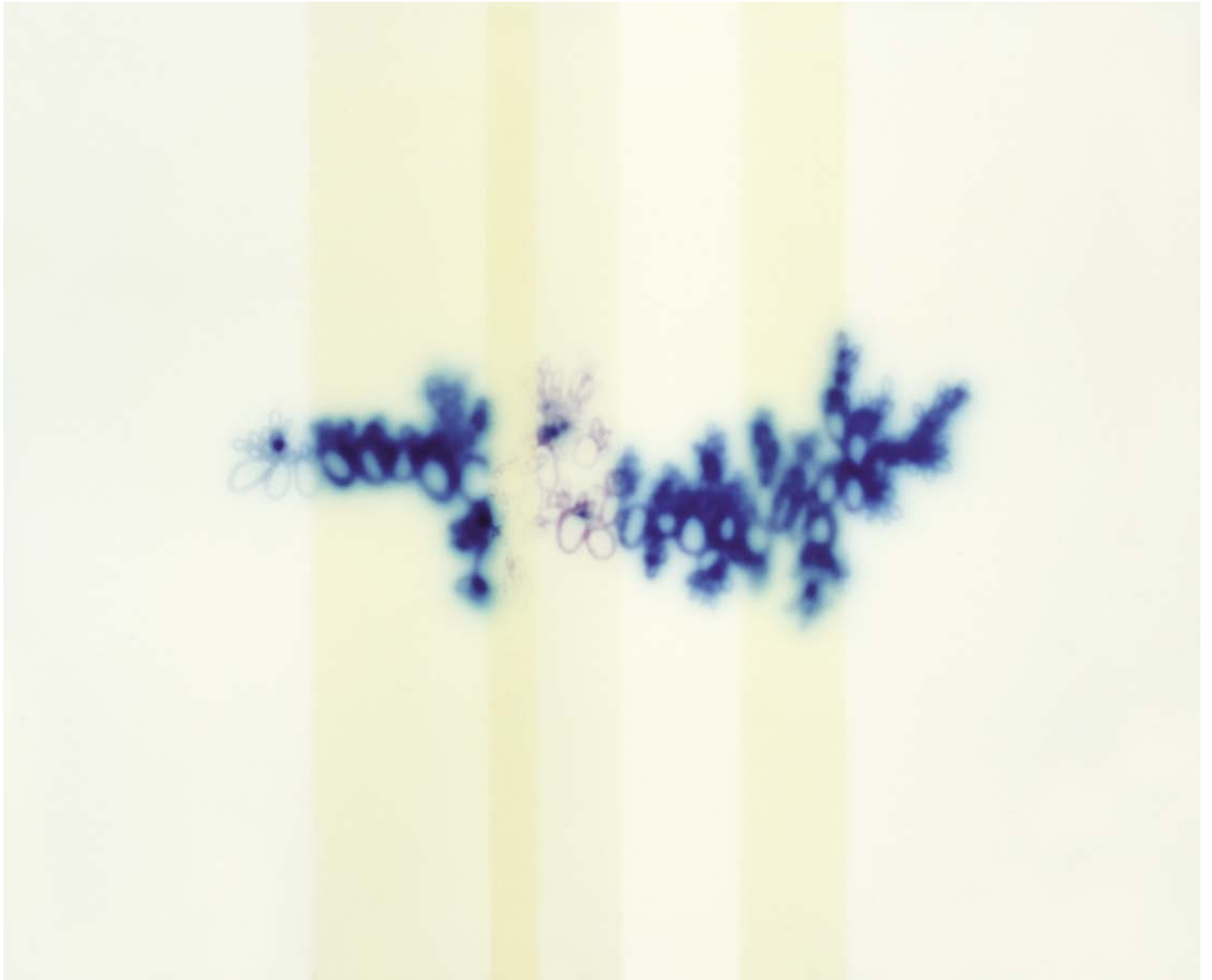


“Testing” by Jaq Chartier

January 9–February 17
Institute for the Humanities
University of Michigan



Blue Cluster (PB#4), 2005, acrylic, stains and spray paint on wood panel, 13 x 16"

“Testing and Testing Again:

Jaq Chartier’s Paintings as a Metaphor for Evolving Thinking”

by Rock Hushka, Curator, Tacoma Art Museum, Washington

Jaq Chartier’s strict and austere images composed from grids, stains, and graphite marks conflate the symbols and techniques of science and art. She balances precision and entropy, deliberation and probability, purity and corruption. The tension she builds is a nearly perfect metaphor for the contemporary social condition.

Chartier’s most immediate referent is the stain-like visuals produced during gel electrophoresis. The movement of the molecules through a gel is noted by colorimetric detection (such as staining), enhanced chemiluminescence, radioactive detection, or fluorescent detection. Gel electrophoresis and a cluster of other techniques collectively labeled chromatography are used to separate macromolecules on the basis of size, electric charge, and other physical properties.

Chartier’s interest in chromatography emerged from years of experimenting with pigments, stains, varnishes, paints, and other art supplies. She diligently applies these substances in rows, drops, puddles, or films which are absorbed irregularly by a porous, neutral ground. She then selectively and purposely exposes portions of these paintings to intense sunlight in her studio over varying lengths of time. Additionally, she frequently provides written notation about the coloration, ground, and exposure times on the surface or the sides of the panel. The changes in the pigment, stains, and ground reveal the extent of chemical changes by direct exposure to unfiltered ultraviolet light.

Like scientific tests generally, her work seems to rely on the unspoken understanding that the experiment can be repeated with virtually the same results and that the information contained in her documents will be unconditionally true and verifiable. However, Chartier freely acknowledges that this is wholly false. That is indeed her game. Chartier’s paintings are never finished, and they will continue to evolve. They are not repeatable in the manner of scientific testing.

An astute viewer realizes that Chartier is considering the painting in two different ways. First, a glimpse of the painting becomes a moment in the ongoing chemical changes within the painting. In memory, her paintings appear as vibrant

splashes of intense color on a pristine white ground. Each panel offers a visual variation of the ancient, philosophical adage that a person can cross a river only once. Despite the sheen of her finishes, the atoms of the stains will continue to migrate, the intensity of the dyes will continue to fade, and the ground will continue to pale and discolor.

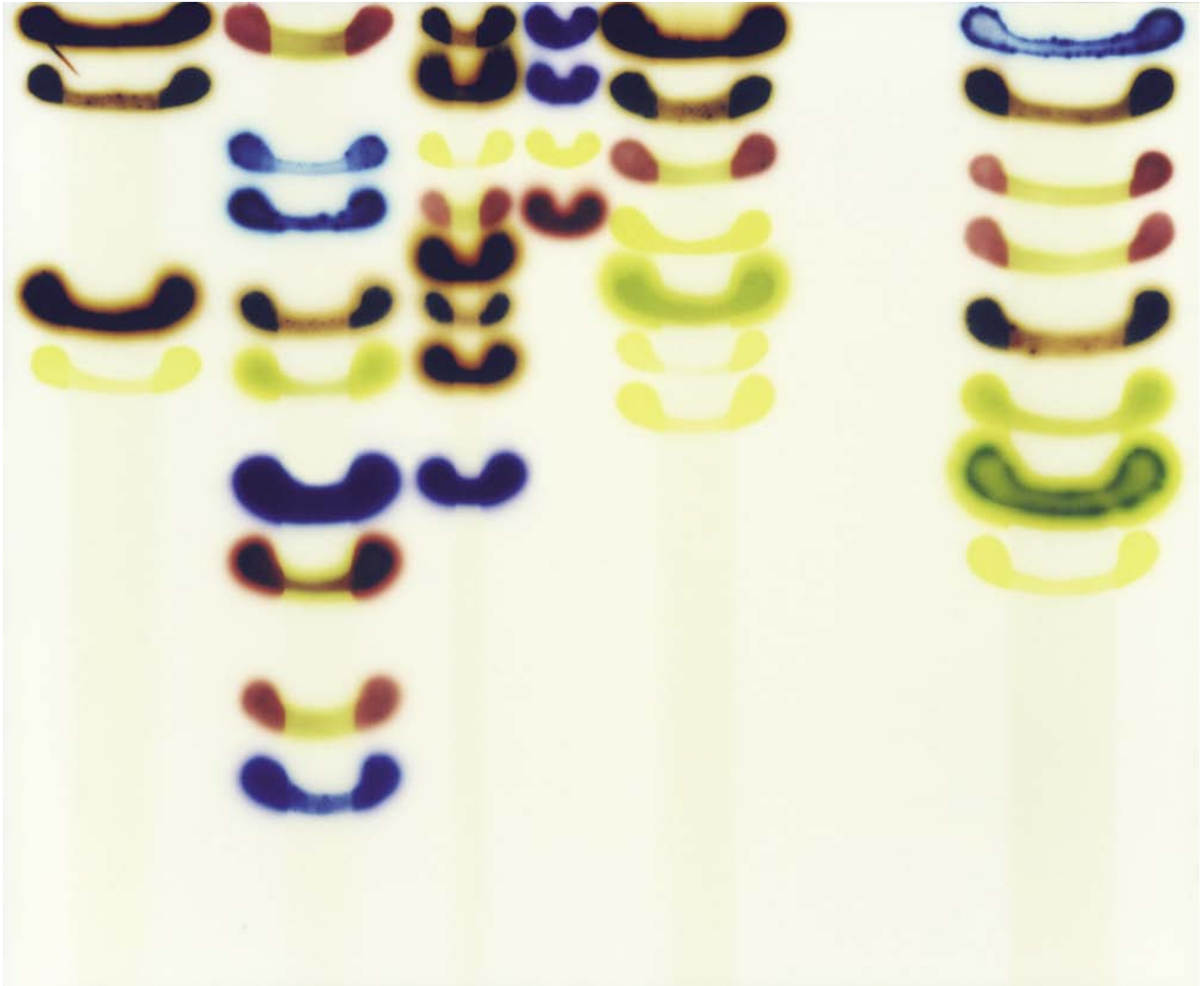
She relies on the accumulation of changes that make her works an endless series of aesthetic discoveries. However, the same viewer should also understand that Chartier's painting represents an ongoing process. The knowledge gleaned from each panel and each test is required to generate the next one. Each effort in Chartier's body of work, then, is not an end unto itself. Rather, it represents one manifestation of how ideas and knowledge accumulate and evolve over time.

This dichotomy instills Chartier's work with an intellectual challenge. It invokes a responsibility on the part of the viewer to think about this painting as a lengthy experience over the life of the object about which he or she can know only a small sliver. This kind of thinking incorporates an understanding about how an art object and the viewers's response will evolve over time. The artist is also expected to accumulate competence, feeling, and knowledge in making the art. These experiences are absorbed and transmitted in the next work that will be shared with audiences. So, in Chartier's work, each painting—and each workday chemical test—builds on the next. The fading, the diffusion, and the dissolving are never really forgotten but trigger the next series of observations and decisions. The undercurrent of this aspect of her painting is that her thinking—to parallel that of her viewers's—will also evolve over time.

The corpus of Chartier's project then relies on the friction between observable, firm knowledge and a device that willingly undermines the presumed stability of that information. She makes a “test” in which the answers will change.

With these incongruities, Chartier taps into the heart of contemporary anxieties provoked by the unknowable flux of our world. Her paintings provide a form of test results that measure something, anything to help navigate today's environment. But yet, Chartier's impulse is to deny the stability of such tests and results. They will always change no matter how tightly one circumscribes the question, the issue, or the phenomenon.

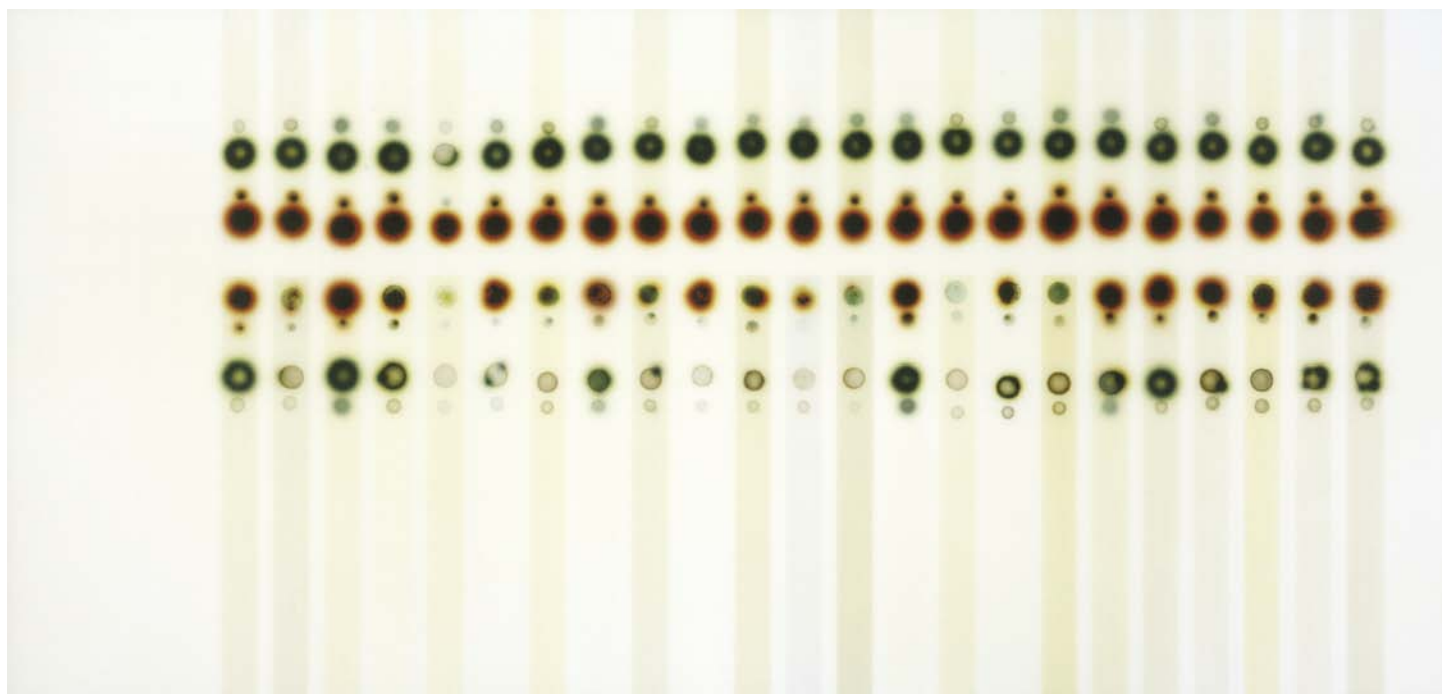
Yet, oddly, Chartier's images of instability also offer an antidote to anxiety. Her repeated tests offer a glimmer of her belief in and hope for humanity. It is almost as though she is an alchemist, driven by an insatiable desire to define and preserve the individual's ability to think about the world in ways as complex as her paintings. Chartier gracefully allows people to use her process as a metaphor for evolving ideas and circumstances.

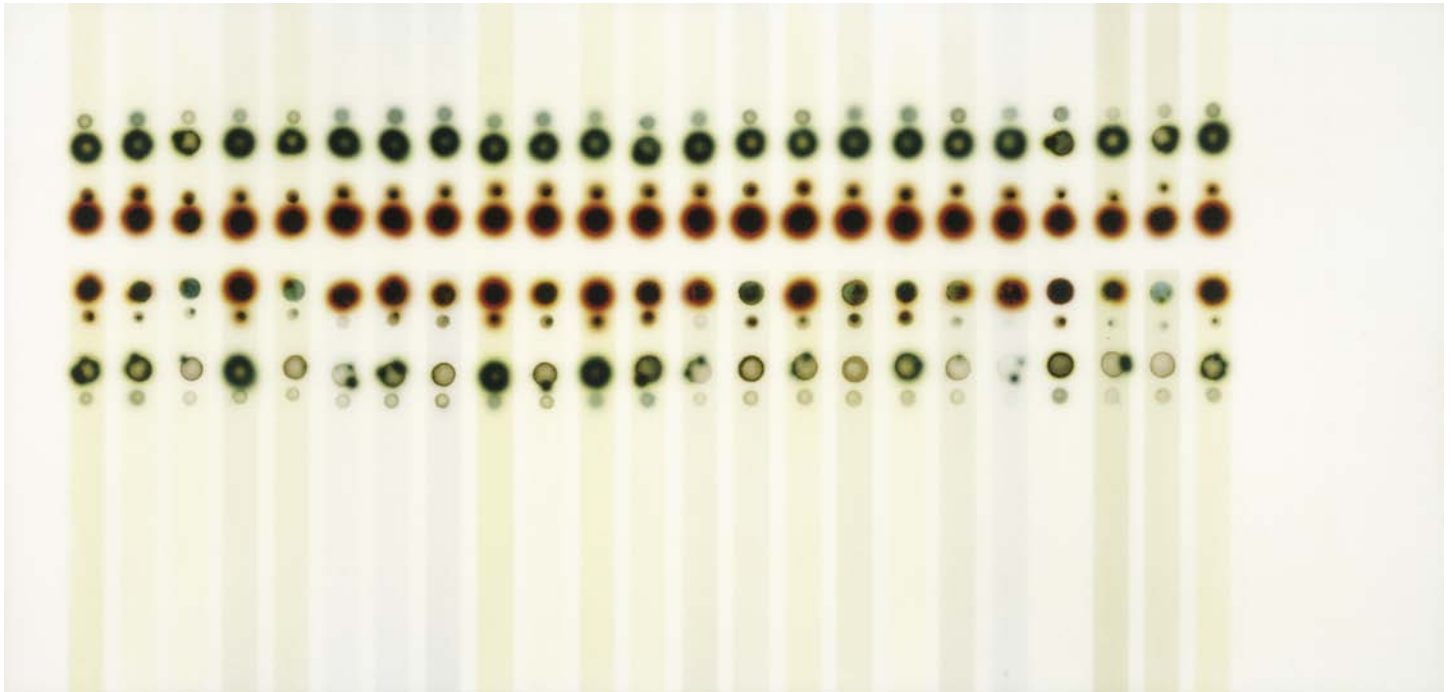


Sun Test: Color Shifters, 2005
acrylic, stains and spray paint
on wood panel, 20 x 24"

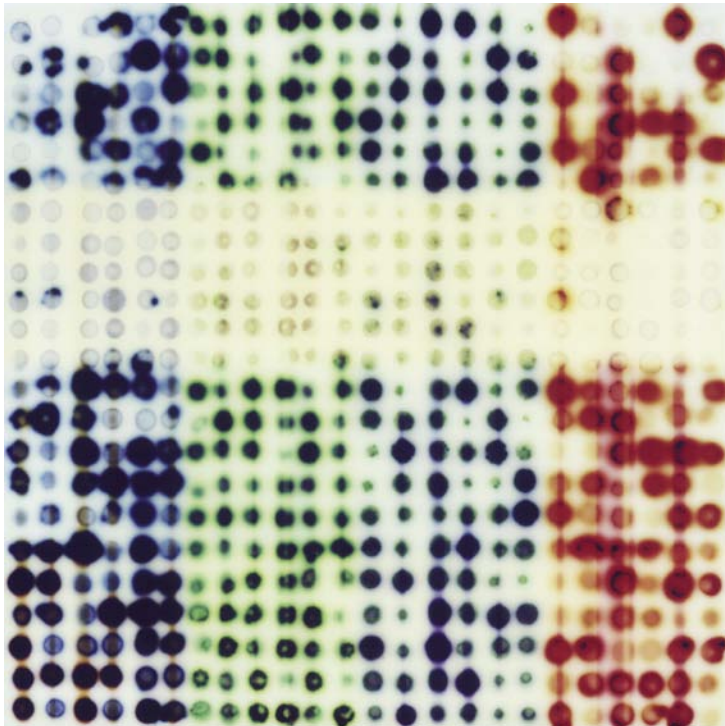
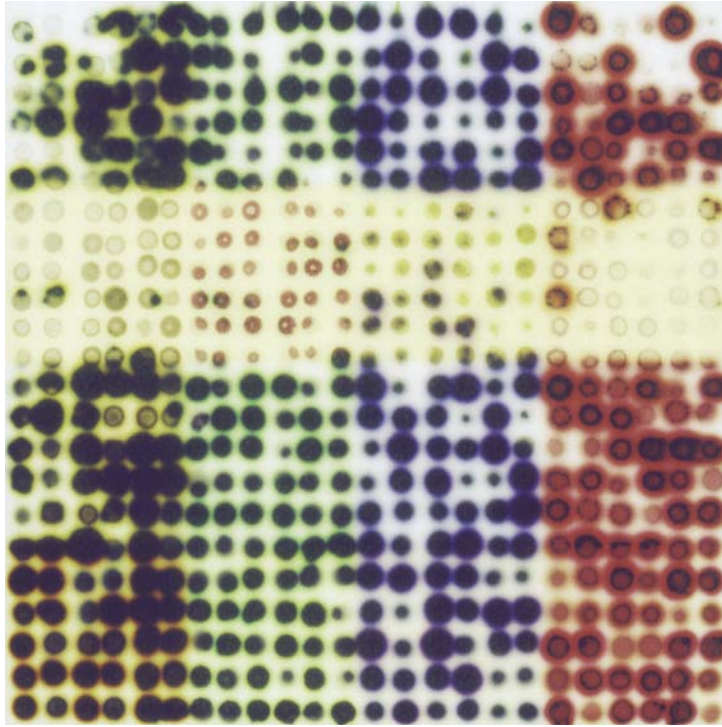


20 Tests w/Magenta Mix #1, 2005
acrylic, stains and spray paint on
wood panel, 40 x 50"

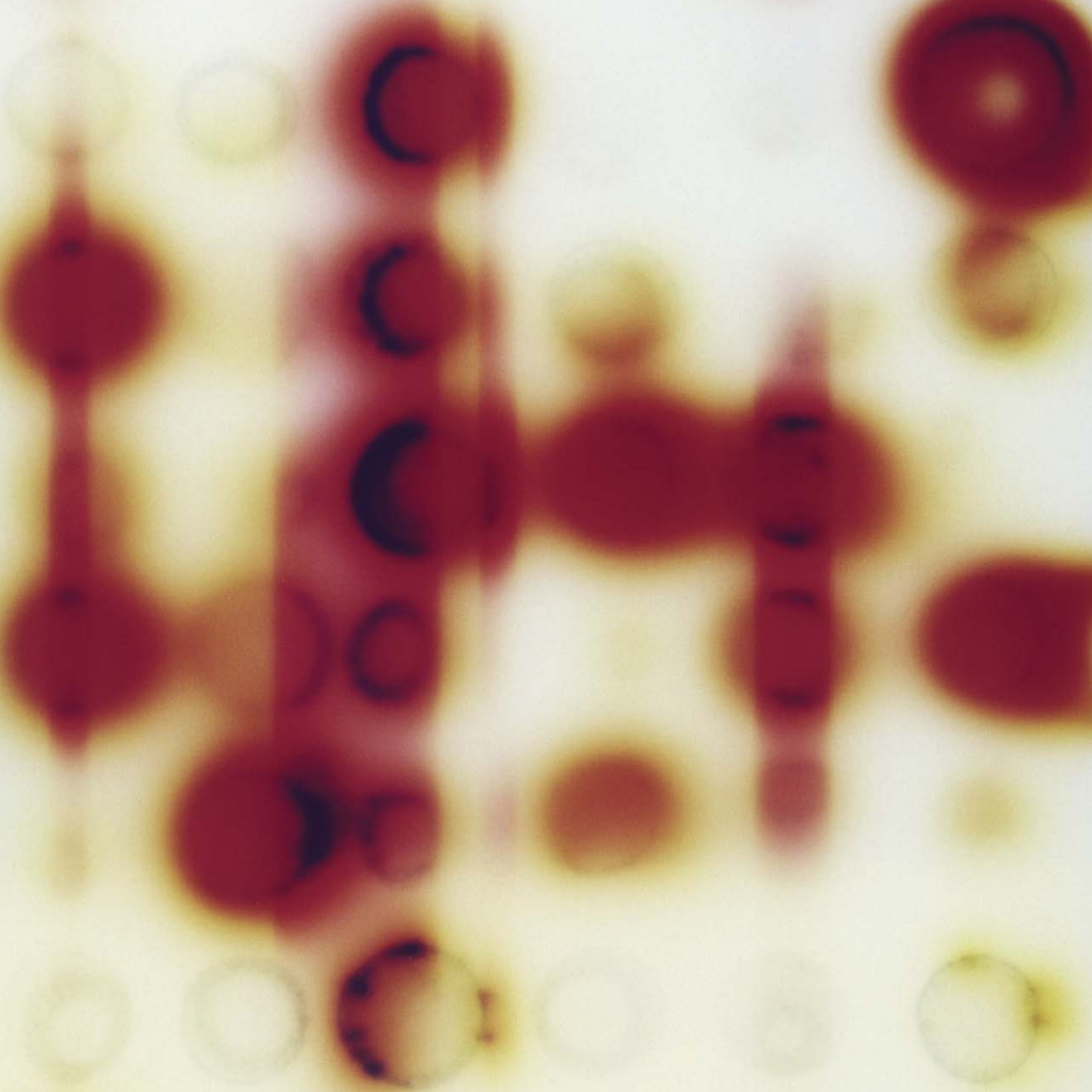




46 Whites, 2005
acrylic, stains and spray paint on
wood panel, 22 x 96" overall (diptych)
Collection of Britton Watkins and
Josh Feldman



4 Stains/Sun Test, 2005
"before exposure," "after exposure," and
a detail; acrylic, stains and spray paint on
wood panel, 15 x 15"



Jaq Chartier

www.jaqbox.com

Education

- 1994 MFA, painting, University of Washington, Seattle
- 1984 BFA, painting (Cum Laude), University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- 1980–81 Syracuse University, New York

Solo Exhibitions

- 2005 Elizabeth Leach, Portland, OR
LIMN Gallery, San Francisco, CA (also 2004, 2002)
- 2004 Schroeder Romero, Brooklyn, NY (also 2003)
- 2003 William Traver, Tacoma, WA
- 2002 Frumkin/Duval, Santa Monica, CA
Cervini Haas, Scottsdale, AZ (also 2000)
- 2001 William Traver, Seattle, WA (also 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995)
- 1997 Laura Russo, Portland, OR

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2005 *5 Painters*, Platform, Seattle, WA
North by Northwest, Winston Wachter, NY
- 2003 *Portals*, Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, MI
- 2002 *Gene(sis): Contemporary Art Explores Human Genomics*, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle. Travelled through 2004: Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley; Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Mary & Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
- 2000 *4 x 4: Four Decades of University of Washington Alumni*, Jacob Lawrence Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, WA
- 1999 *Neddy Artist Fellowship Exhibition*, Seafirst Bank Gallery, Seattle, WA
- 1998 *Hands On Color*, Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue, WA

Selected Awards

- 2005 Neddy Fellowship Award nominee, Behnke Foundation, Seattle, WA (also 1999)
- 2004 Visual Arts Grant finalist, Creative Capital Foundation, NY
Special Projects Grant, 4 Culture (Cultural Development Authority of King County), Seattle, WA
- 2002 Artist Trust/Washington State Arts Commission Fellowship, Seattle, WA
- 2001 PONCHO Special Recognition Award, administered by the Betty Bowan Committee of the Seattle Art Museum, WA
Joan Mitchell Foundation Award nominee, New York, NY
- 1999 Artist Trust GAP Grant (Grants for Artists' Projects), Seattle, WA
Betty Bowan Finalist, Seattle Art Museum, WA

Collections

Amgen
Chambers Hotel, New York
City of Seattle, Portable Works Collection
Microsoft Collection
The Progressive Art Collection
Rosetta Inpharmatics
Swedish Medical Center, Seattle
Tacoma Art Museum, Washington
Bill & Ruth True, Seattle
USAA

Selected Bibliography

- 2005 Koplos, Janet. "Report from Seattle: Plugged In and Caffeinated," *Art in America*, September, p. 69, (reproduction).
Perry, Vicky. *Abstract Painting Concepts and Techniques*, New York: Watson-Guptill. Reproduction p. 125.
Wiggin, Ashley. "The Art of Science," *Seattle Magazine*, May, 2004, p. 30, (reproduction).
- 2004 Berry, Colin. "Jaq Chartier and Elizabeth Scheidl at LIMN Gallery," *Artweek*, June, pp. 12–13, (reproduction).
Baker, Kenneth. "Art grapples with science and politics," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 27, (reproduction).
Jaq Chartier: Testing. Seattle: Marquand Books.
Reichle, I. *Kunst aus dem Labor: Zum Verhältnis von Kunst und Wissenschaft im Zeitalter der Technoscience*. Austria: Springer Wien New York. Reproductions on book cover and pp. 225–229.
Shaviro, Steven. "Genetic Disorder," *Artforum*, January, p. 42, (reproduction).
- 2003 Bullis, Douglas. *100 Artists of the West Coast*. Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer Books. Reproductions pp. 172–173.
Connor, Jill. "Jaq Chartier: Testing," *Contemporary*, no. 53/54, pp. 117–118, (reproduction).
Lovejoy, Bess. "Weird Science: Art and Chemistry Collide in the Lab of Jaq Chartier," *Resonance*, no. 38, pp. 32–33, (reproductions).
- 2002 Engelson, Andrew. "Dot Matrix: Jaq Chartier smears the line between art and science with her DNA-inspired blobs," *Seattle Weekly*, March 28, p. 63, (reproduction).
Failing, Patricia. "Seizing the Moment," *ARTnews*, March, p. 76.
Hackett, Regina. "Messing with Mother Nature," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 6, p. E-1.
Religion & Ethics News Weekly. *Bioethics and the Book of Life*. New York: Thirteen/WNET. Reproduction on video box and booklet covers.
Roth, Charlene. "Jaq Chartier and Amy Ellingson...," *Artweek*, March, p. 17, (reproduction).
- 2001 Cullum, Jerry. "Seductive Changes," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Dec. 28, p. Q5.
- 1997 McTaggart, Tom. "Biology Lessons," *The Stranger* (Seattle), May 22, p. 56, (reproduction).
- 1995 *Foo Fighters*. Capitol Records/Roswell Records. Reproductions on CD booklet, album cover, and cassette J-card.
September Competition. Exhibition Catalog. Alexandria, La.: Alexandria Museum of Art, (reproduction).



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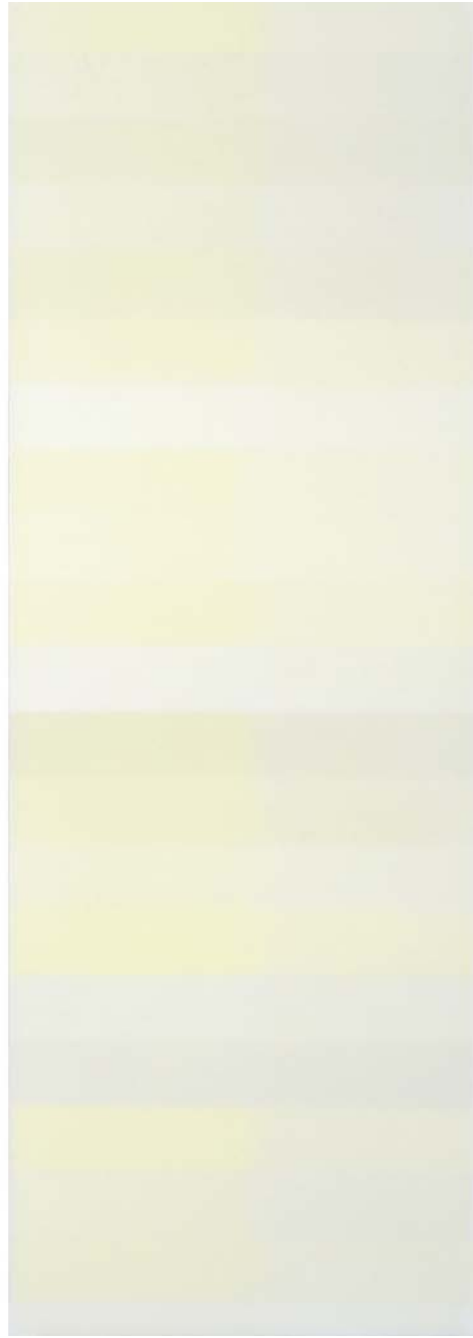
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This exhibition is presented in conjunction with the College of Literature, Science and the Arts theme semester, “Explore Evolution.”

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Cover: *Sun Test: Blues*, 2005, acrylic, stains and spray paint on wood panel, 28 x 36"

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Sun Test: 40 Whites
(Part 2—after first exposure
March-May '04), 2004
various white spray paints
and acrylic on wood panel,
20 x 15" overall (diptych)



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