

press release

Eric Poitevin & Elsa Salonen

inaugural exhibition of a second space in China
Not yet a meaning

June 1st — August 15, 2026
Le Clézio Gallery, Aranya JinShanLing



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This exhibition presents a quiet dialogue between French photographer **Éric Poitevin** and Finnish artist **Elsa Salonen**. Beneath a shared minimalist visual grammar, the two artists approach nature from divergent paths, finding a subtle resonance in a fundamental inquiry: how do we perceive existence?

Éric Poitevin's photography is a deliberate act of «subtraction.» He reduces the medium to a direct presentation where the image simply is. His work is built upon a rigorous mechanism of removal—stripping away context, narrative, and emotional suggestion. His images reject the «decisive moment» in favor of a sustained, elongated state of time.

Produced under strictly controlled conditions, Poitevin's method exudes a sense of classical rigor and minimalism. Subjects are «uprooted» from their original contexts by shadowless white backgrounds, denying the viewer the comfort of a backstory and forcing a direct confrontation with the object itself. In his *Plants* series, each specimen is presented at a 1:1 scale; as the plants vary in size, so too do the dimensions of the works. In a space devoid of reference, these plants stand with a posture that is at once delicate and resolute, achieving a tactile, sculptural quality—a monumental solemnity.

Poitevin remains wary of the rhetoric of Romanticism, the «picturesque,» or ecological moralizing. He does not seek to depict or comment on the forests of the Meuse; instead, he reveals the intrinsic truth of natural things: their sensory essence, their density, and their duration. Avoiding the drama of chiaroscuro, he bathes his subjects in a uniform, diffused light that settles evenly across every pixel. His work has no intention to «move» or «educate» the viewer; it is an honest, unvarnished presentation of an object's «true state.»

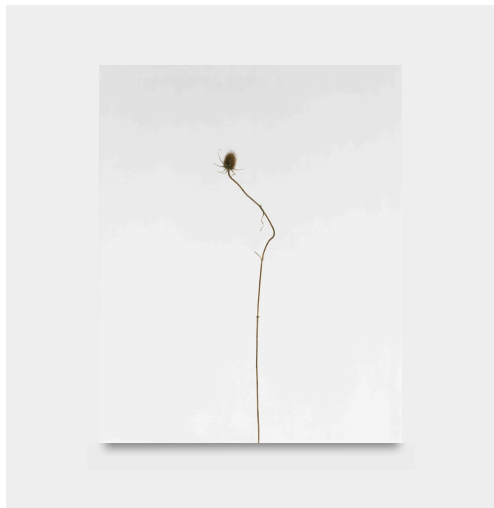
In contrast, **Elsa Salonen's** practice is one of transformation rather than representation. Based on the observation that changes in life cycles are signaled by changes in color, she extracts pigments from plants using ancient alchemical techniques. These are preserved in glass flasks and displayed alongside the decolored, white floral remains. This ritualistic act—separating the pigment as «energy» or «soul» from the fiber as «flesh»—is both a physical and a literary dissociation.

Salonen's work is deeply informed by alchemy and animism: traditions that view the natural world as a sentient presence. In the Finnish tradition of nature worship, it is believed that every environment is overseen by a guardian spirit (*haltija*) who protects the land. Consequently, Salonen works exclusively with natural pigments, grinding meteorites, animal bones, seashells, and botanicals into her media.

Opening public
May 31
6pm — 9pm

Le Clézio Gallery
Building 14-07,
Aranya JinShanLing,
Luanping County, China

Visuel page de couverture
Lee Ufan, *Dialogue*, 2009,
aquarelle sur papier, 77 x 103 cm
Photo © Lee Ufan / Le Clézio Gallery



Eric Poitevin, *Untitled*, 2014, Inkjet printing, 115 x 92 cm, edition 2/5.
Photo: Eric Poitevin © Eric Poitevin / Le Clézio Gallery



Eric Poitevin, *Untitled*, 2014, Inkjet printing, 112 x 90 cm, edition 2/5.
Photo: Eric Poitevin © Eric Poitevin / Le Clézio Gallery



Eric Poitevin, *Untitled*, 2014, Inkjet printing, 138 x 108 cm, edition 2/5.
Photo: Eric Poitevin © Eric Poitevin / Le Clézio Gallery

Each substance carries its own temporal scale and ancestral knowledge. Here, the pigment is no longer just a medium; it is the concept itself. By mixing meteorite dust with organic matter, she links microscopic phytochemistry to macroscopic cosmic evolution, echoing the truth that terrestrial life is kin to stardust.

Within the gallery, two distinct practices engage in conversation:

On one side is Poitevin's Stasis — the decontextualized object manifesting in the absolute present.

On the other is Salonen's Flux — matter in a constant state of translation between time and energy.

One tends toward the minimal and the neutral, reaching depth through a level gaze; the other points toward symbolism and transmutation, revealing invisible connections through the very fabric of matter.

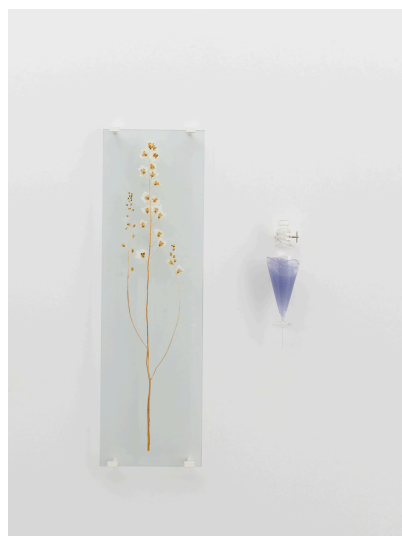
This juxtaposition acts as a mechanism for the «re-calibration» of sight. When the image is reduced to as it is and matter is deconstructed into what it contains, the viewer is guided into a perception of time removed from daily experience. Nature ceases to be a resource or a backdrop; it becomes a field of existence that demands to be re-seen and re-understood.

The exhibition thus becomes a sensory and meditative encounter: finding strangeness in the non-narrative gaze, sensing time in the traces of transformation, and ultimately shifting our attention from the «interpretation of meaning» to the «manifestation of being.»

It is a slow calibration. We stop rushing to understand and simply pause to see how a thing exists. Here, nature does not explain itself, nor does it point elsewhere. The exhibition is, in the end, quite simple: on one side, how things look; on the other, the traces of what has occurred. Together, they point not to a specific meaning, but to a slowed-down temporality—the gradual revelation of existence itself.



Elsa Salonen, *We Are All Made of Stardust (Cygnus)*, 2016, stone and iron meteorite dust on glass, metal shelf, 100 x 150 cm, unique piece.
Photo: Elsa Salonen © Elsa Salonen / Le Clézio Gallery



Elsa Salonen, *Delphinium Spell (Lionhearted Lila)*, 2024, a decoloured delphinium and its distilled colour pigments, isomalt, glass, metal, 100 x 30 cm + Flask, unique piece
Photo: Joe Clark © Elsa Salonen / Le Clézio Gallery



Elsa Salonen, *Pagan Promise of Spring (Lathyrus latifolius I)*, 2025, a decoloured wreath woven from everlasting peas and its distilled colour pigments, isomalt, glass, metal, 45 x 45 cm + Flask, unique piece. Photo: Joe Clark © Elsa Salonen / Le Clézio Gallery



Eric Poitevin

Born in 1961, Longuyon, France

Born in 1961 in Longuyon (Meurthe-et-Moselle), Eric Poitevin is a major figure in contemporary French photography. From early on, he favoured the large-format view camera, a 19th-century technique requiring heavy equipment and long exposure times. Beyond these apparent constraints, the process compels the artist to anticipate the construction of the image while establishing a particular relationship to time and allowing for a close engagement with his subjects. At a time when photography was still largely dominated by street photography—enabled by lightweight cameras and widely disseminated through the press—Poitevin, alongside other photographers, contributed to a reappraisal of studio-based practice.

Through his series of portraits, nudes, landscapes, and dead animals, the artist initially appears to revisit the tradition of painting by reinterpreting its major genres. However, his pared-down compositions introduce subtle shifts in relation to art history's enduring visual references: rather than establishing direct or literal filiations, he engages with them in a more oblique, reflective manner. Poitevin instead situates his work within the history of photography itself, referencing portrait masters such as Nadar, Richard Avedon and Irving Penn, as well as lesser-known or anonymous practitioners whose experimentation helped establish photography as a powerful field of visual expression.

Often working with a white background and the natural zenithal light of his studio, Poitevin approaches even the most modest subject with minimal distraction. This absence of context grants the subject an absolute value and a sense of singularity, whether it is a reed, a human figure, or a dead animal. The artist remains deeply rooted in his environment, attentive to the subtle variations of familiar things—a way, for him, of “opening worlds” and reconsidering what appears already known or established.

A graduate of the École d'art de Metz in 1985—one of the few institutions at the time offering a photography programme—Poitevin went on to teach at the École supérieure des arts décoratifs in Strasbourg, the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Nancy, and later at the Beaux-Arts de Paris. Deeply attached to his region and its landscapes marked by the First World War, he lives and works in Mangiennes, in the Meuse department of France.

Public collections in France (selection)

Centre Pompidou, CNAP, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Maison Européenne de la Photographie (MEP), Musée de la Photographie Charles Nègre, Établissement public du château de Versailles, Fondations Cartier et Hermès ; FRAC Auvergne, FRAC Bourgogne, FRAC Languedoc-Roussillon et FRAC Île-de-France.

Public collections abroad (selection)

MAMCO (Geneva, Suisse), Ueshima Museum (Tokyo, Japon), Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein.

Corporate collections

Société Générale, Deutsche Bank.

Noticed selected exhibitions

2025 | Kyoto, Japon : Temple Ryosokuin, The Space Between (Kyotographie 2025)
2024 | Paris, France : Centre Pompidou, La matérialité en photographie
2023 | Chaumont-sur-Loire, France : Domaine de Chaumont, Rétrospective annuelle
2022 | Lyon, France : Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, Rétrospective majeure
2019 | Versailles, France : Domaine de Trianon, Visible/Invisible
2018 | Vierzon, France : Musée de l'agriculture Le Compa, Le chemin des hommes
2017 | Paris, France : Fondation Cartier, Le Grand Orchestre des Animaux
2014 | Nice, France : Musée de la Photographie, Résonances
2011 | Dijon, France : Le Consortium, Sans titre
2007 | Paris, France : Musée de la Chasse
2004 | Genève, Suisse : MAMCO, Études longitudinales



Elsa Salonen

born in 1984, Turku, Finland

In the early 2010s, the artist developed a technique involving the distillation of colour pigments from flowers, resulting in their transformation into pale, colourless forms. The extracted pigments are preserved through various methods and presented alongside the decoloured floral matter. This process is grounded in the observation that, across both plant and animal kingdoms, organisms tend to lose their chromatic intensity in death—flowers wither and bodies fade. Within this framework, colour in nature is understood as an indicator of vital presence. In these three-dimensional works, a poetic separation is enacted between life energy, preserved in pigment, and the emptied, pallid vegetal form from which it has been extracted.

Over the past decade, the artist has worked exclusively with natural pigments, which serve as the conceptual foundation of each work. These pigments are produced through the grinding of diverse raw materials, including meteorites, animal bones, and seashells, as well as through the extraction of colour from medicinal herbs, fungi, and algae. Each material is understood to carry a specific form of knowledge, or “experience,” which informs the conceptual structure of the work. The self-collected materials often establish connections to specific natural sites around the world, while more universal themes are addressed through materials gathered with the assistance of specialists.

The practice draws upon the traditions of painting, installation, and conceptual art. It is informed by an artistic interpretation of alchemy, which investigates the universe through natural substances, as well as by animism, particularly Finnish nature-based belief systems. A shared principle between alchemy and animism lies in the conception of nature as living and sentient. In Finnish nature worship, each environment is believed to be governed by a tutelary spirit (*haltija*), responsible for the well-being and balance of its territory. Traditionally, maintaining harmonious relations with these spirits through offerings was considered essential for ensuring successful hunting, fishing, and harvesting.

Similarly, medieval alchemists studied natural materials, which they also employed in the production of pigments. Through these substances, they sought to comprehend the structure of the universe, the interconnectedness of all things, and the individual’s position within this broader cosmological order. The glass vessels employed in the works reference this alchemical tradition and its visual representations. In alchemical practice, repeated distillation was a central process through which the purest essence of a substance—and metaphorically of the alchemist themselves—was believed to be retained within the flask.

Public collections in Finland (selection)

Finnish National Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, HAM (Helsinki Art Museum), Saastamoinen Foundation (EMMA), Wihuri Foundation, HUS Art Collection

Public collections abroad (selection)

Musée des Beaux-Arts de Verviers (Belgique), Museo d’Arte Contemporanea di Lissone (MAC, Italy).

Noticed selected exhibitions

2024 | Helsinki, Finlande : Musée HAM, Memory of Matter
2023 | Paris, France : Institut finlandais, The Alchemist’s Garden
2022 | Séoul / Oslo : Art Sonje Center, Minimalism-Maximalism-Mechanismmm
2022 | Berlin, Allemagne : KINDL, Landscapes of Belonging
2021 | Turku, Finlande : Musée WAM, Ekologia: Luonnon kutsu
2021 | Berlin, Allemagne : Schwartzsche Villa, Stories of the Spirits of Nature



Portrait of Antoine and Yan Le Clézio.
Photo : Laurence M. © Le Clézio Gallery.

Established in 2024 on the renowned Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré in Paris, Le Clézio Gallery is a contemporary art space dedicated to a philosophy of "Simplicity and Rigor" amidst the vibrancy of the metropolis. Representing a diverse roster of artists from Finland, Scotland, France, China, Japan, and Estonia, the gallery serves as a platform for multifaceted cultural perspectives within the contemporary landscape.

Founders

In its expansion to Aranya Jinshanling, the gallery remains steadfast in its core values of "Simplicity, Rigor, and Contemporaneity." By curating a selection of global works, the gallery intervenes in the present with a singular vision—offering an honest response to our complex and shifting reality while collaborating with artists of varied backgrounds to decipher the world in its current moment.

Antoine Le Clézio served for many years as a gallery manager in the Saint-Germain-des-Prés district of Paris. His academic background is rooted in the study of Medieval and Contemporary Art, a field in which he has published significant scholarly contributions. His innate passion for contemporary practice and his deep engagement with artists have fostered a community of collectors and academics built on a foundation of intellectual exchange and shared values.

Yan Wang spent sixteen years in France, beginning her career by founding a simultaneous interpretation studio in the South of France during her university years. She has provided high-level diplomatic services for prominent figures, including former French Presidents Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande. She later co-founded an art curatorial firm in Paris, collaborating with major museums across France, South Korea, and China to produce and host significant exhibitions.

Le Clézio

Paris, France



View of the facade, Le Clézio Gallery (Paris).
Photo : Bruno Pellarin © Le Clézio Gallery.

Aranya, Jinshanling (China)



View of the facade de Le Clézio Gallery (Aranya JinShanLing, China).
Photo: Zhang Hui © Le Clézio Gallery.

Established in Paris since 2024 and opening its second space in Aranya Jinshanling, at the foot of the Great Wall of China, on May 31, 2026, Le Clézio Gallery is dedicated to promoting contemporary artists from diverse backgrounds whose practices engage with notions of **impermanence, memory, transculturality, and play.**

The gallery supports both emerging and established artists, with the ambition of fostering their visibility on the international art scene.

Committed to encouraging dialogue between diverse audiences while sharing the depth of thought and creativity of its artists, Le Clézio Gallery presents a dynamic programme of gallery exhibitions alongside off-site projects.

This programme is further enriched by interdisciplinary events bringing together live performance, talks, book signings, and workshops for children, contributing to an ongoing exchange between art and society.

Useful information

Website www.lecleziogallery.com

Mail info@lecleziogallery.com

Paris **157, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, 75008 Paris**

wednesday — sunday, 11h — 19h

monday — tuesday (by appointment)

metro line 9 : station Saint-Philippe-du-Roule

metro line 1 : station George V

bus line 52 : station Friedland - Haussmann

**Aranya
JinShanLing**

**Building 14-07, Aranya JinShanLing,
Luanping County, China**

tuesday — sunday, 9h — 18h

Please book your visit via Aranya App

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