Julian Charrière
A Thousand Worlds

20 December 2025 –
14 March 2026

Julian Charrière - *A Thousand Worlds*
Text by Martin Guinard

The forthcoming solo exhibition *A Thousand Worlds* by Julian Charrière at Galerie Tschudi, brings together a selection of works shaped by the vast underwater realm, which has long drawn our imagination beneath its tides. The exhibition invites the viewer to descend into the ocean's concealed domain, from the abyssal plains of the Pacific Ocean to the glacial waters of the Arctic Ocean and the warm, intricate reefs of the Coral Triangle. Each site discloses a distinct way of inhabiting the world, a different negotiation between life, matter, and time.

The title of the body of work, *Midnight Zone*, points to both a moment and a place: a potential deep-sea mining site rich in mineral resources that lies off the coast of the Clarion-Clipperton Zone between Hawaii and Mexico, across an expanse of nine million kilometers.

A lighthouse lantern gradually descends into the ocean's depths, surrounded by a school of fish that becomes increasingly sparse as it moves toward the abyss. This light traces the path of a beam of sunlight, piercing the water's surface and remaining visible to a depth of about one thousand meters. This is the threshold of the midnight zone. Beyond this point, darkness.

Yet the absence of visibility does not mean emptiness: plankton and other microscopic life-forms thrive at these depths. With the light acting like a silent beacon, flashing intermittently to illuminate its surroundings, Charrière evokes the threshold between the visible and the invisible. For what is most significant in this work is not what appears on screen, but what remains unseen beyond the limits of the light. Indeed, thousands of meters below lie polymetallic nodules, rock-like formations rich in materials that are highly coveted for strategic reasons, notably for smart-car batteries. However, the ecological impact of using heavy equipment to extract these nodules from the seafloor remains largely unknown, and any contamination is at risk of disseminating itself far more quickly in the water than it would on land. In *Midnight Zone* (2024), Charrière's video work, though a moving image, echoes the etymology of photography: writing with light.

The artist also plays with the conventions of photography, as seen in works like *Veils* (2025), where pieces of dead coral are ground into pigments and used to depict the documented subject, live coral. This approach invites reflection on the circularity between what an image represents and the materials used to produce it, blurring the lines between presentation and representation.

In the works presented in this exhibition, Charrière continues his poetic and sensitive exploration of the incommensurable impacts of climate change. The perspective he adopts here is, quite literally, abyssal. The concept of the Anthropocene[1] typically focuses on the terrestrial impact of human activity on terrestrial geological strata, the imaginaries it conjures are predominantly continental rather than oceanic, earthly rather than aquatic. By delving into these underwater spaces, Charrière extends his aesthetic inquiry, guiding his camera through diverse environments and ecotones. In doing so, he populates the mental landscapes and ecologies of those who engage with his work.

[1] This concept is often criticized within social sciences for failing to identify those responsible for the climate crisis. Moreover, it continues to pose challenges in scientific circles, where researchers struggle to agree on an appropriate marker that can reflect the global impact of human activity. This led to the rejection of the term by the Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy in 2024 to name a new geological era. This, of course, was not a rejection of the idea that human activity has indeed affected the climate.

Further works

In *After the Smoke Cradle* (2025), Charrière embeds volcanic landscapes into photolithographs printed with pigments made from obsidian, sulfur, volcanic ash, and crushed lava stone collected from Hekla, Cumbre Vieja, Ijen, Bromo, and Etna. These materials are not mere representations but residues of eruptions, folding geological time and the ongoing force of fire into the surface of the prints. The work is a fossilized afterimage of catastrophe, inviting viewers to sense the tremors of a planet still forming beneath our feet.

In *Albedo* (2025), a photographic series produced beneath icebergs and pack ice, Charrière's engagement with the ocean extends into polar waters. Here, familiar coordinates dissolve: frozen formations appear to rise rather than sink, and distinctions between above and below, ocean and cosmos, are unsettled. Rather than illustrating climate change directly, the work stages it as a perceptual condition: an embodied loss of orientation within planetary systems.

A Stone Dream of You (2024) presents lava-stone sculptures with obsidian eyes, referencing deep-sea hydrothermal vents, or black smokers, where life is thought to have originated. The works highlight the role of geological processes in the emergence of life and evoke a lingering animism often overlooked in modern, anthropocentric perspectives.

In *A Thousand Worlds* (2025), Charrière presents a small mirror whose reflective surface is created from silver extracted from thousands of black-and-white photographs. Using the gelatin silver process, he reclaims this hidden material, revealing the often-overlooked economy of image-making and reflecting on human resource extraction. The work becomes a collective mirror, where personal histories and captured moments are dissolved and reconstituted, offering a space to contemplate identity, memory, and the cycles of creation and transformation.

Choralography (2025) is a spatial experiment that immerses visitors in the bioacoustic landscape of coral reefs, revealing the rich network of sounds, from crustacean clicks to whale songs, often overlooked by human senses. As the installation progresses, marine communications are subtly distorted to highlight the impact of human noise and the temporal dissonance between sound in water and air. The work reflects both the vulnerability of reef ecosystems to anthropogenic disruption and the regenerative potential of acoustic enrichment, offering a poetic and physical dialogue between presence and absence, past and future.

In *Spiral Economy* (2025), a vending machine dispenses fossilized ammonites: ancient marine beings compressed into stone over millions of years. Multiplied by an infinity mirror and released through the banal gesture of payment, these relics of deep time expose the absurdity of treating the ocean's geological past as an endlessly renewable commodity.

Midnight Zone (2025) is a photographic series emerging from Charrière's cinematic exploration of the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. Guided by the drifting light of a wayward Fresnel lighthouse lens descending through the water column, the series captures the marine ecosystem suspended above this remote, mineral-rich seafloor.

Towards No Earthly Pole (2019) is a photographic series developed during Charrière's 2017 Antarctic expedition for the first Antarctic Biennale. Using drones with cameras and spotlights, he captured the landscape in fragments and low light, emphasizing scale, shadow, and the interplay of ice and terrain. The resulting images create an otherworldly effect, revealing a frozen environment that is both immense and intimate. The series challenges romanticized perceptions of polar regions while highlighting the limits of human experience in these extreme landscapes.