

Claire Tabouret

Les Créatures

Jul 10 — Sep 3, 2026 | Gstaad

Almine Rech Gstaad is pleased to present 'Les Créatures,' Claire Tabouret's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from July 10 to September 3, 2026. The inspiration for this new body of work was a 1947 ink on paper work by Pablo Picasso. The artist spoke with Louisa Mahoney about the legacy of Picasso, her enduring passion for monoprinting, and the generative power of myths.

Louisa Mahoney: I thought a good place to start would be the Picasso work included in the show. When did you first come across this particular work, and why did you choose it?

Claire Tabouret: The idea was to work on the printing process: repetition producing a unique aspect. That's what monoprint is: you're printing and you're making a unique work. And Picasso, he played a lot with this kind of reproduction that makes unique works. [*Centaure et Bacchante*] is an ink on paper work with watercolor added to it, which gives it a unique aspect.

We wanted something that's part of a multiple but remains singular. I'm super into this for my own practice and I love how Picasso plays with it too, because it shows an appetite. You're super productive, and in every work you have so many potential directions. When you have this kind of multiple printing process, you can really play with that. Each time you add a little something, it pulls it in one direction or another.

LM: It's very interesting, because the base is the same, which is different from painting. In a print, the bones can be the same, but then it can go off in so many different directions, like parallel versions of the same idea.

CT: Which would be the same with a mold I think, with a sculpture. You have a mold and then can either glue stuff on it or paint stuff on it, and it really changes the character of the sculpture while the bones remain the same, as you say. I think that's what was interesting about this work for me. It's very playful to just allow yourself to do that, there's a lot of joy.

The subject too, this kind of funny couple; when you look at them, they don't really go together, visually. I have a daughter who is four years old right now, and she's really into *Beauty and the Beast*. And when I look at this I see a different version of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. I was thinking that I wanted to produce a derivation, like a dream, of these couples. So the bacchante and centaur, the *Beauty and the Beast*, *Swan Lake*... there's always one animal and one human. I think it says a lot about love, eroticism, of course power dynamics, desire... it's very ambiguous, when the woman is this beautiful erotic woman and the male figure is a kind of beast.

What I find exciting about the subject is that I think there's a desire for the woman to have control and power over these beasts, if you look at it from a different angle. I'm inspired by Picasso's work and his freedom and his energy and each time I look at books and catalogues, I always find ideas to work on and it gives me a lot of energy. But sometimes I'm like: "How can I enter this from a female point of view? This is what I see in this couple: what if it's the Disney version? When I look at it with my daughter, I'm like, actually this princess who's so tiny and frail and beautiful, she has complete power over the beast. And that's exciting. You can transpose this onto the adult world and see a fantasy for women.

LM: This is the third project that you've done in relation to Picasso's work. Each one has been very distinct. How has your relationship with him evolved over the years?

CT: I think there are different levels of dialogue when I look at his work. It's a dialogue with myself because obviously he's not responding. It's really the material, that is where I can really nourish myself. The use of collage: whatever he has he uses. And then there's the subject matter. So I would say there are two levels that inspire me, depending on where I am in my life and my creation. In this particular example the technique, the medium, and the subject coincided, and it's a direct homage.

Sometimes looking at it his work hurts a little bit, because of the gender thing. As a woman painter I just feel so much... But with art, you see through someone else's eyes, and you don't only see the good. I'm not one of the people who thinks we have to all be perfect to be creative, it's about complexity and darkness and ambiguity. Everything is there, all the subjects are there. The centaur, the minotaur, I'm definitely not interested in the same way he is. That's why I find it interesting to keep going, because I'll see it through my own eyes, my own experience, my own body, and it will be a different story.

LM: Something that was very remarkable about Picasso was that he was so prolific and he wanted to continuously create and find new vocabularies, new mediums. Is that something that you identify with him as well, that appetite?

CT: I definitely am a prolific kind of person. One other thing I really enjoy when I look at his work is that everything is reused. I think that's how I approach monoprints: everything that's left can be reused to become something else. Anything you have you can use and transform.

LM: It's that energy to keep moving forward. When did you first discover monotypes?

CT: I really started when I moved to Los Angeles and had my first apartment. Even before I had a studio there. I started my prints by rolling an empty bottle of wine on paper. I didn't have a press. What's cool about it is it's very basic, you don't need any tools.

I was very inspired by Degas' monoprints. I find them beautiful, so different from the rest of his work. I think monoprints just open something up for people. At the same time in LA I discovered Nicole Eisenman's works. She also did monoprints, and so I think I was just like: "What is this technique?" Each time I see monoprints, there's a way the ink is applied, I want to eat it.

I started making monoprints in my little apartment and it became obsessive. First I bought a little press the size of a small table, and then I bought one the size of a car. Now I have a huge press that I had custom made in New Mexico. It's been 10 years now, and thousands of monoprints. I'm constantly printing because there's something about the reverse of the image. It creates a discovery, a little element of surprise that frees you. It gives you a lot of freedom because it's in two steps: you paint and you roll the press and you discover your print. I don't know what it is about that that gives me so much freedom and so much joy.

You can complexify it. It's very simple but, for instance, it's the technique I used to do all the life-size paintings for the stained-glass for Notre Dame. For this I used several layers of stencils, so it becomes a bit like a mille feuille. You can put a stencil on the next print, you can remove it, use the ghost of this, move your stencil on the other side and just keep going.

LM: So it can be as simple or as complicated as you'd like it to be?

CT: As refined or spontaneous as you like. It's more about painting than drawing. Monoprints can just be about brushstrokes.

LM: And do you feel like it has helped expand your practice when you're not printmaking, that it feeds your other work?

CT: I think it's a great way to brainstorm for me: new subjects, new series. Is it going to be sculptures, or a new show of a new subject matter? In painting, there are always monoprints first for me, or while I'm working on other stuff. It's the way I work. Most of the time, I'm very spontaneous with it. I'm just trying, trying, trying. It really is my sketchbook.

LM: You've talked before about "ghost stains". Did they play a role in these specific works?

CT: Usually I print three of the same print, using the ghost. So it's getting paler and paler, but you add stuff to it. There is this transformation and this is where I find I'm playing with this idea of seriality and uniqueness. You can see it's from the same drawing, the same plates, the same composition, exactly in the same spot, but because you add a bit—just like he [Picasso] added watercolor—I add a new thing to the ghost each time. It reminds me of these songs we have for kids in French, where the last word of the phrase is the beginning of a new sentence. You can just keep going. This is how I think of it.

LM: It's not like a painting where it sort of begins and then ends. It really feeds something—

CT: Yeah, like a flow of something—

LM: Or making bread, or something fermented, where you take a little bit of it and that makes the next loaf...

CT: That's true. That's a great idea. And that's how I feel about Picasso's work in general: everything feeds the next thing. While I was reading about him recently, they were saying, "he went to Boisgeloup the 13th of March to the 16th and did these five sculptures." And I was like: "Oh, that's great, how things can happen really fast." Some things take a very long time and you can see that they mature and they change slowly, before they become their final version. But some things also happen really fast. I think for me too, some things like monoprints can happen really, really fast. Some days are extremely important.

LM: I'd love to talk a bit more about the classical. You've done a show that worked with the myth of Icarus, and you featured classical sculptures in the Venice show, two Madri of Capua. Have the mythological and the classical always interested you?

CT: You can find so much in it. My work is often quite literary, it has a narrative aspect. It's about telling stories with transformations and costumes and things. I like characters that represent a situation, like when I was painting wrestlers, it was not directly about mythology, but you could link it to mythology or classical compositions. If you think of the wrestlers, you could think of antique vases. But it's not very surprising that so many artists end up- consciously or not- quoting these stories because they hold so much.

LM: And they influence how we see the world because they really are these first stories. In the Picasso, I find this work really compelling because it's two figures that feel isolated from each other, almost like statues.

CT: Yeah, it's true. It's very sculptural. It's two sculptures and it's a bit theatrical, like a play. You can imagine them just stepping in front of you... I find there's something a little bit funny about it, an awkwardness.

LM: Have there been other things that have come up in the process of making these works? You're back in France after being in Los Angeles?

CT: I'm still a little scattered. Nothing is really set up. It's a very transitional time of my life with so many changes: from one country to another, from being alone to being a mom with a family, from being in the city to being in the countryside. Everything is different. What I do have now is that I'm back with my small press, because the big press is still in a big crate. In two months I'll have everything installed. It's funny because I'm back in a small room, a bit like a student with my books on the floor and my little press. And I'm back to monoprints. It's not like I had left them, but it's this thing I'm kind of clinging to, like a raft.

LM: Monoprint has been a constant through this period of changes. It's quite full circle in a way.

CT: It fits this moment in my life to be able to freely explore these subjects and these compositions.

LM: After doing larger monoprints—like for the show at the Grand Palais—is it nice to return to a scale that's a bit more intimate?

CT: Yes, something precious and contained and super dense. It's all there.