

Galerie

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Women Shaping
the Art World

CLAIRE TABOURET
at her château as
she prepares to unveil
her windows
for Notre-Dame



Artist Claire Tabouret, in a coat by Dior, walks the grounds of the château in France's Centre-Val de Loire where she lives with her family and keeps her art studio. OPPOSITE: Tabouret wears a Dior Bar jacket over her own clothing. Fashion styling by Victoire Seveno.

The Passion of Claire Tabouret

From her home and studio in the French countryside, the artist brings her painterly language to a landmark commission: new stained glass windows for Notre-Dame



By **Hilarie M. Sheets** Photography by **Delphine Chanet**



The challenge of creating contemporary stained glass windows for Notre-Dame de Paris—

to mark a new chapter for the medieval cathedral after its devastating 2019 fire and five-year restoration—proved irresistible to French artist Claire Tabouret. Following a government-sponsored competition, she was chosen by a jury in 2024 and tasked with interpreting the biblical story of the Pentecost across six consecutive chapel windows.

Tabouret's dazzling painted cycle, translated into stained glass by Atelier Simon-Marq, will be installed on the south side of the cathedral's nave by the end of the year, replacing six 19th-century windows designed by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. Those windows, which survived the fire, will be relocated; similar windows on the north side will remain in place. Even before Tabouret's selection, the French government's call for a contemporary gesture to herald Notre-Dame's rejuvenation stirred controversy among preservationists. "It's a very interesting debate honestly," says the artist, who is known for her lush, haunting paintings of individuals and groups suspended in indeterminate time and space. "How do you live with a historical building? What do you restore? What do you change? How do you keep it alive?"

These are questions she faces herself in the ongoing renovation of a 15th-century château she purchased in the countryside about an hour-and-a-half drive outside Paris. Last year, after a decade in Los Angeles, she moved there with her husband, Nathan Thelan, an American furniture maker, and two daughters. Tabouret works in the rambling, turreted castle where the family lives, while other buildings on the property—arranged like a small village—are being converted into studios for painting, printing, sculpture, and woodworking.

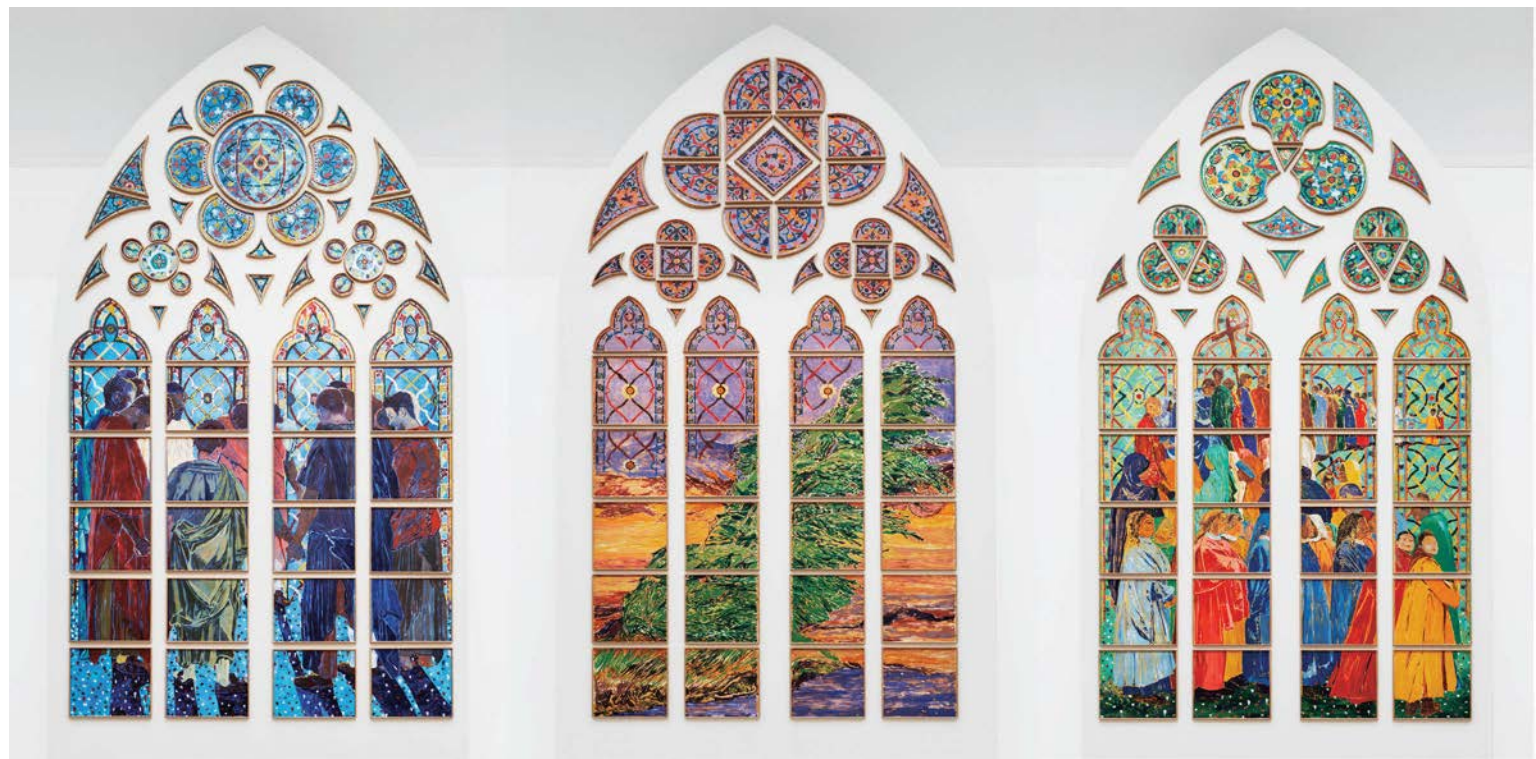
Tabouret unveiled full-scale models and preparatory work for her stained glass windows in a recent exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris. Although she has typically drawn from autobiographical subjects, the Pentecost compelled her, she says, to work in service of a story larger than herself—one she sees as resonating with Notre-Dame's global significance. "The Pentecost is a text of high hope about tolerance and living together, understanding each other."



Tabouret examines a series of untitled artworks she completed in 2025. OPPOSITE: The artist says the château where she now lives with her family has become "a character in my life."



The artist found inspiration in the story of the Pentecost for the stained glass windows for Notre-Dame, studies of which are seen before her here as well as three full-scale versions (opposite), which were recently exhibited at the Grand Palais in Paris.



“For Monet, he had Giverny. He created his garden, his house, his kitchen, everything. I think for me, this is my Giverny”

Her paintings visualize the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus’ followers: a great wind roiling the landscape, tongues of fire showering down on apostles, and a strikingly extroverted, tousle-haired Virgin Mary at the center, with arms thrust upward. “I had to paint her as a real woman,” says Tabouret. “She just lived through the most heartbreaking experience a mother could go through.”

Her final window—the last thing visitors will see before exiting the cathedral—presents a diverse crowd led by children in a harmonious procession arcing toward the sky. The exhibition drew about 325,000 visitors, bringing Tabouret attention far beyond the art world.

The artist discovered an overwhelming desire to paint when she was four and saw Claude Monet’s “Water Lilies” while visiting the Musée de l’Orangerie in Paris with her parents. The intense sensation is one of her earliest memories and one she can still experience today, she says. “If I see something I find beautiful, I want to run back to the studio; it’s nearly painful. In this way, I feel very close to some of the religious people I’ve met recently.”

At 17, she moved to Paris to attend the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, graduating in 2006. After years of

working in obscurity, with some shows where she didn’t sell anything, she looked up the office address of collector François Pinault and invited him to a 2013 exhibition at a small Paris gallery. He came and bought out most of the show. “It was a spectacular moment,” Tabouret says. “This launched my career.”

In 2015, Tabouret moved to Los Angeles, where she set up a studio in an industrial building, which allowed her to increase the scale of her canvases. Her paintings have often depicted psychologically loaded self-portraits, figures locked in conflict or sexual embrace, and slightly unsettling ensembles of children wearing costumes or school uniforms. “When you look at group portraits of kids or teenagers, it raises questions of destiny,” says Tabouret. “Who is going to become what?”

Now she is once again venturing into unfamiliar territory in her renovation of the château, which borders a river and a forest. “It’s become a character in my life,” says Tabouret, who has a show of new works inspired by her daughters opening in December at Perrotin Dubai. “For Monet, he had Giverny. He created his garden, his house, his kitchen, everything. I think for me, this is my Giverny.” □

TANGUY BEURDELEY, COURTESY OF PERROTIN