

# Ronan Bouroullec

## 'Clair-obscur'



4 September - 1 November 2025

It is a constellation of lights — a word more fitting here than “lamps” or “fixtures,” which feel too technical or mundane — that Ronan Bouroullec presents at Galerie kreO. Each piece consists of two elements in fine blown glass: a white opaline globe that diffuses the light, encased in a transparent corolla of grey or amber glass, which, depending on the angle, filters or reflects it.

These lights are most often connected to others of the same kind by rods of solid anodised aluminium, in black or grey. The drawing, the assembly details, the tension of the edges — all are executed with a precision reminiscent of watchmaking. Together, they form compositions of 3, 4, 9, 15 or 20 lights, arranged in vertical lines, circles, or grids.

The luminous sphere set within a corolla — whether in glass, metal, or perspex — is a formal archetype in the history of designer lighting, from Fontana Arte to BBPR, Gino Sarfatti, and even Pascal Mourgue. But the works presented here by Ronan Bouroullec speak less to design history than to that of Minimal Art.

This reference appears in the choice of materials — anodised metal recalling Donald Judd’s *Progressions* or *Stacks* — in the forms (one might think of Robert Irwin’s *Untitled* disc from 1968, held in the MoMA collection), and in the effects, like the halos of Dan Flavin’s neon works. But it is most present in the way these pieces engage perception and spatial awareness.

Their structure, based on repetition and variation — hallmarks of Minimalism in both sculpture and music — allows for potentially endless configurations. Their scale is determined by the space they occupy, and which they, in turn, transform. They engage with different simultaneous states of light: diffused, filtered, reflected, projected. Perception shifts depending on the orientation of the light source: toward the wall, it evokes suspension and mystery; toward

the viewer, it becomes a play of circles and halos. To quote Robert Irwin: “It’s not about making objects... what’s at stake is our state of awareness and the nature of our perceptions.”

Ronan Bouroullec’s approach to light has always played out between two poles: abstraction — as in *Luce Orizzontale* and *Luce Verticale* (2020), or *Luce Sferica* (2025) — and evocation, at work in earlier series such as *Bells* (2005), *Conques* and *Lianes* (2010), or *Chaînes* (2016), all milestones in his long-standing collaboration with Galerie kreO. A kind of oscillation between form and perception. This new series stands firmly on the side of abstraction, of phenomenology. “What you see is what you see,” as Frank Stella once said in defining the essence of Minimalism.

Minimalism — the word is not easy to use, so burdened is it by the clichés of contemporary design, where it has come to suggest dullness, laziness, or oversimplification. If Ronan Bouroullec lays claim to it, it is to re-infuse it with opposite qualities: delicacy, subtlety, sensitivity, ambiguity.

He restores to it a spirit that Pascal once described in these terms: “We hardly see them; we sense them more than we see them; it takes endless effort to make them felt by those who don’t already feel them themselves. They are so delicate, and so numerous, that it takes a very fine and very clear sensibility to grasp them.” That spirit has a name: *l’esprit de finesse*.

**Martin Bethenod**