

The tension, before the release
By Marie Darrieussecq

Manuele Vonthron speaks of “what brews within the painted instant”. I contemplate her canvases and I see the obvious presence of this instant, that brushstroke. The other possibilities cancel out one another; what is left unpainted enables her to paint what is there. What is there becomes the only visible presence. The right movement is needed to leave her mark on the canvas, as if moved by the *qi*, the spirit, which guides the hand in Chinese painting. “I sometimes saw,” she says “the canvases painting themselves, as if the liquid was alive.” Manuele crosses her studio with long strides, stops, drinks a glass of water. The tension, before the release. Sometimes like a tombstone to be lifted, the presence of the dead, a minefield, traps. And then there is a fresh pulse, a new breath. The dispersing colour takes shape. One must pass through and also be passed through, become porous to the world and to light, become the movement...

Canvas after canvas, all to discover the canvas that she was searching for, never knowing how it would look. Canvases which are only outwardly “for nothing”, canvases containing the canvas to come, like words crossed out, discarded pages, manuscripts tucked away, all of which are not lost but allow the book's creation. Manuele sees the blank spaces underneath the liquid as it traces its colour, a flowing trace. Sees the shape of the blank space beneath. Not beneath, but above, as “above” as the colour itself.

At the beginning Manuele primarily worked the dark colours, black as a colour. Inks and romantic asphalt landscapes. Then the sea air blew into the studio – did the blue enter on this breeze? Yet if blue is the colour of water – and air – it comes from traditional wisdom, a child's wisdom and a collective wisdom, as much concerned with water-matter as water-colour. “The water is blue, not a water blue, but a liquid paint blue” said Artaud of Van Gogh's rivers. There is a blue in Manuele's work, which makes us see the water and the air differently.

