

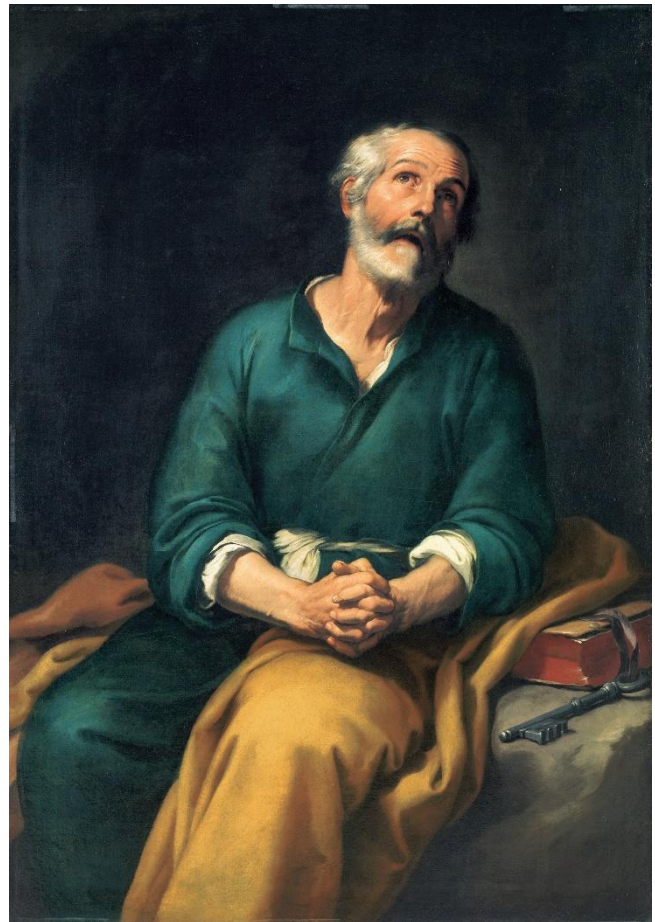
## Manuele Vonthron: Larme Picturale

We are pleased to present our new Online Viewing Room (OVR) featuring recent works by French artist Manuele Vonthron (born 1962), artworks that invite us into a space where emotion becomes matter, and abstraction becomes memory.

Known for her deeply intuitive approach to painting, her work is included in major collections like Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, recognizing that the artist has developed within the years a singular visual language that merges material experimentation with life resonance. Our OVR features twelve works on paper, each measuring 100 cm × 70 cm (39.4 in × 27.6 in), created with pigment and a rare binder, Caparol, whose silicate nature imbues the surface with a delicate, mineral-like fragility.

The title, *Larme picturale*—literally “pictorial tear”—serves as both metaphor and method, anchoring the exhibition in a centuries-old tradition of tears in painting while reimagining their expressive potential in contemporary abstraction. What unfolds is not a depiction of tears, but a distillation of their essence: fragile, persistent, and quietly transformative.

Throughout the history of painting, the tear—*la larme*—has served as a potent symbol of human vulnerability, spiritual transcendence, and emotional rupture. In early religious art, tears were not merely signs of sorrow but sacred conduits between the earth and the divine. In Bartolomé Esteban Murillo’s *Saint Pierre en larmes* (circa 1650–1655), for example, the tear is rendered with devotional intensity, capturing the moment of Saint Peter’s repentance after denying Christ. The Baroque *chiaroscuro* heightens the emotional gravity, casting the tear as a luminous droplet of redemption. These early depictions were solemn, reverent, and deeply anchored in theological narrative, where the tear functioned as a visual prayer.



Saint Pierre en larmes by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

As art moved into the Modern era tears began to shift from sacred icon to psychological metaphor. In the early 20th century, Surrealism reimagined the *larme* as a stylized, often ironic object. Man Ray's *Les Larmes de Verre* (1932) photograph presents a mannequin's face adorned with artificial glass tears—emotion transformed into ornament, sincerity into spectacle. This rupture marks a modern sensibility: the tear is no longer divine, but performative, questioning the authenticity of feeling in an increasingly mechanized world. René Magritte's *La Saveur des Larmes* (1948) furthers this inquiry, proposing the tear as a paradox—what does it mean to taste sorrow? Is it bitter with memory, sweet with longing? Magritte's surrealism turns the *larme* into a sensory metaphor, inviting introspection and ambiguity. By 1975, Salvador Dalí's *La Larme de Sang* (Tear of Blood) pushes the motif into the realm of existential drama. Here, the tear is no longer water—it is blood. Pain and beauty collapse into one, and the *larme* becomes a symbol of psychic rupture. Dalí's work, part of his Moses and Monotheism series, reflects a post-war consciousness grappling with trauma, identity, and the fragility of belief. The tear, once sacred and then surreal, now becomes a visceral emblem of suffering and survival.

It is within this rich lineage that Manuele Vonthron's *Larme picturale* finds its voice. Her practice is deeply personal and quietly radical, reclaiming the tear not as a motif but as a method—an emotional architecture embedded in material. The choice of caparol is deliberate: it cracks, resists, absorbs, and reflects, echoing the ephemeral nature of tears themselves. The paper does not merely hold the image—it seems to weep. Vonthron's layering of materials—earthy pigments, translucent washes, and brittle textures creates a tension between permanence and dissolution. Behind every composition lies a metaphorical drop—a *larme* that speaks to her own trajectory, her lived experience, and her reflections on the human condition. These are not literal tears, but emotional residues: stains of



Les larmes de verre by Man Ray



La Saveur des larmes by René Magritte



La Larme de Sang by Salvador Dalí

memory, fragments of longing, crystallized moments of introspection.

Her work resists narrative, yet it is profoundly autobiographical. Each piece is a silent confession, a visual elegy, a map of feeling. The challenge of working with abstraction is central to Vonthron's practice. To abstract is to distill, to strip away the literal in search of essence. It is a terrain of emotional excavation, where the gap between imagination and execution is vast and often treacherous. Manuele Vonthron embraces this challenge with grace and grit. Her paintings do not illustrate emotion—they evoke it. The marks are gestures of searching, not statements of arrival. The viewer is invited not to decode, but to dwell—to feel the weight of silence, the shimmer of memory, the pulse of something unspoken.



Larme Picturale by Manuele Vonthron

In *Larme picturale*, abstraction becomes a language of intimacy. The works are quiet yet insistent, fragile yet resilient. They do not shout—they whisper. And in that whisper, we find the echo of centuries: from Murillo's sacred sorrow to Dalí's bleeding psyche, from Man Ray's glassy detachment to Vonthron's mineral tenderness.

The tear, ever mutable, finds new life in her hands—not as a symbol, but as a substance. Not as a motif, but as a method. Not as an end, but as a beginning.

Ricardo Fernandes, 2025