



PRESS KIT

DU 10 OCTOBRE 2025 AU 1^{ER} FÉVRIER 2026

**COLLECTION
DE L'ART BRUT
LAUSANNE**

**LAURE PIGEON
INFINIMENT BLEU**



Portrait of Laure Pigeon
Unidentified photographer
Photo credit Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

Preview guided tour
for the press

Thursday 9 October 2025, 10:30pm
By Anic Zanzi, curator at the Collection de l'Art Brut
Booking : sophie.guyot@lausanne.ch

Adresse

Collection de l'Art Brut
Avenue des Bergières 11
CH – 1004 Lausanne
www.artbrut.ch

Tél. +41 21 315 25 70
art.brut@lausanne.ch

LAURE PIGEON, INFINITE BLUE

10 OCTOBER 2025 – 1ST FEBRUARY 2026

Laure Pigeon (1882–1965) started drawing at the age of 53, and her body of work was only discovered after her death. Her creations, saved from destruction, were subsequently acquired by Jean Dubuffet. The Collection de l'Art Brut likely holds the entirety of her output: a little over 400 drawings, many contained in notebooks, and produced over the course of 30 years.

Like fellow spiritualist artists Madge Gill, Jeanne Tripier, Augustin Lesage and Raphaël Lonné, Pigeon believed that she had been “chosen” to convey messages from the beyond and claimed that her hands were guided by an outside entity. As a starting point for each piece, she would use a Ouija board to spell out the missive from the spirits letter by letter, relinquishing all control over what she was writing. Next, she would set the board aside and let her hand wander across the page of its own accord, producing a composition of interwoven texts and drawings. Through this process, Pigeon tapped into her unconscious, resurfacing memories that merged with products of her imagination.

Pigeon's oeuvre can broadly be divided into two periods. Her early works feature interlacing lines that stretch and wind across the page like woven threads, tracing shapes and the outlines of letters. The drawings she produced from 1953 onwards, meanwhile, are dominated by the colour blue in all its shades: from the lightest tones to darker hues sometimes verging on black. These later pieces include various motifs – such as compact masses, dancing plants and animals, initials and names – mixed in with the figures and a long line of masked or veiled female silhouettes. Despite their variety, Dubuffet saw the same “inherently poetic inspiration” behind all of Pigeon's works.

Pigeon's art has regularly been displayed as part of the Collection de l'Art Brut's permanent exhibition. It also featured in one solo show, held at the museum in 1978. In 2014, the museum published *The Art Brut Fascicle No. 25*, a special edition of its regular publication dedicated entirely to the work of this previously little-studied artist who is nevertheless a major figure in the history of Art Brut.

This new exhibition features a large number of Pigeon's works, including some that have never been shown before, and all attesting to the artist's visual energy, assured hand and keen sense of composition.

Blue, in all its forms, was the vehicle for Pigeon's creative endeavours.

Curated by Anic Zanzi, curator at the Collection de l'Art Brut

BIOGRAPHY

Laure Pigeon was born in Paris on 8 July 1882. Her parents, Alida Aimée Léau, a laundress, and Eugène Pierre Marie Pigeon, a labourer, married a year after her birth. She was just five years old when her mother died following a stillbirth. Pigeon was raised by her paternal grandmother, Anne Marie Goupil, a widow in her sixties, in Val-d'Izé, Brittany. Only piecemeal details of Pigeon's life are available: there is no record of how old she was when she went to live with her grandmother, how long she remained there, where she went to school, what her occupation was, or how she earned a living before she married.

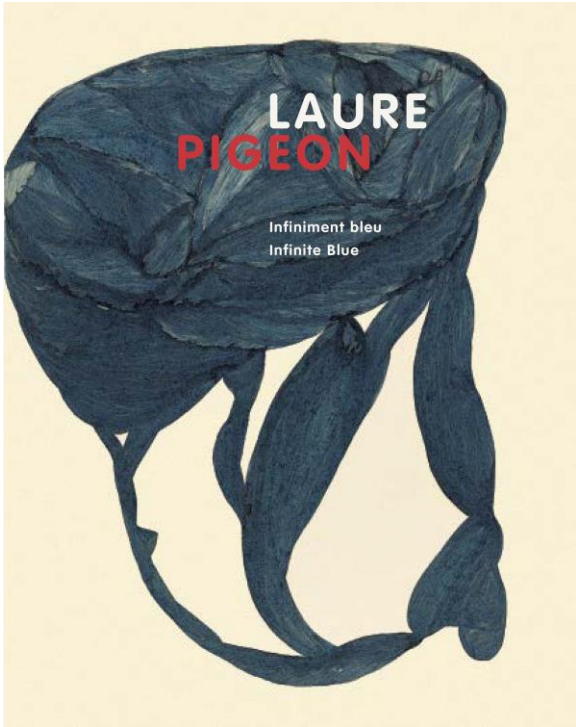
In 1917, Pigeon, then aged 34, married dental surgeon Edmond Émile Rey, who was called up for military service shortly after the wedding. It is believed that, after the war, she lived in Lille with her husband, whose dental practice was located there. Later, the couple moved to the nearby city of Roubaix after Edmond once again sold his busy practice to set up a new one elsewhere.

In 1933, after discovering her husband had been cheating on her, Pigeon left him and moved into a boarding house, where she lived for the next decade or so. It was there that she met a young woman called Marthon, who introduced her to spiritualism. Despite separating from her husband, Pigeon had remained close to her parents-in-law, but they died in 1934. It was around this time, when she was in her fifties, that she began drawing.

In 1943, Pigeon moved into an apartment in the Parisian suburb of Nogent-sur-Marne, where she lived until her death. Céline Émilie Lombard, her ex-husband's sister, covered her living expenses. Following the death of Edmond's second wife in around 1952, Céline – or "Lily", as Pigeon called her – arranged for her brother to move in with Laure. But the former married couple found living together impossible. Edmond died a short while later, in 1953.

Pigeon died on 26 August 1965 at the age of 83. Céline Émilie Lombard, recalling her sister-in-law's association with the Maison des Spirites, a spiritualist centre in Paris, reached out to its members to ask if they wanted to come and collect the drawings, which had been abandoned in the now-empty apartment – a move that saved the artist's oeuvre from destruction. Later that same year, Jean Dubuffet acquired Pigeon's works, adding them to the collection that would later form the initial holdings of the Collection de l'Art Brut.

A detailed timeline can be found in the exhibition catalogue.



Laure Pigeon, Infinite Blue, preface by Sarah Lombardi, texts by Flavie Beuvin, Anic Zanzi, edited by Sarah Lombardi, Lausanne/Milan, Collection de l'Art Brut/5 Continents Editions, 2025, 200 pages, bilingual edition in French and English

20



les œuvres²⁶. Pour la préparation de son article, Jean Dubuffet analyse en détail les créations de Laure : il les classe par ordre chronologique, les décrit, souvent brièvement, et indique celles qu'il souhaite voir reproduites dans l'ouvrage à paraître. Il décrypte aussi les mots, les noms qui apparaissent dans les dessins ou les messages écrits parfois séparément. Son étude se concentre plutôt sur la production des premières années, en majorité des dessins contenus dans les cahiers. Les grandes compositions bleues des années 1953 à 1964 sont peu représentées en regard de leur nombre dans le corpus. Curieusement, le titre de son article, « La double vie de Laure », ne donne pas le nom de famille de la créatrice, alors qu'il est mentionné dans le premier paragraphe du texte. Le patronyme n'est pas caché comme celui d'autres ou d'autres d'Art Brut qui ont fait des séjours dans des hôpitaux psychiatriques, et dont il s'agit de ne pas divulguer l'identité en raison du secret médical. Pourtant, le travail de Laure Pigeon a longtemps été présenté sous son seul prénom²⁷.

Des leur acquisition en 1965, des dessins de Laure Pigeon sont exposés dans les locaux parisiens de la Compagnie de l'Art Brut, rue de Sévres, dont l'accès est volontairement limité. Dessins de « protéger » ses découvertes de regards non avertis, Dubuffet s'explique en ces termes : « Je sais toujours très émerveillé par les dessins de votre belle-sœur : et je ne suis

by Jean-Louis Victor, there are other works besides those held in the Collection de l'Art Brut.

When Jean Dubuffet discovered Laure Pigeon's artworks, he was delighted by its quality and abundance and began immediately to study it with the intention of writing an article for an issue of the *L'Art Brut* booklet. In 1964, he had recently launched this series of monographic publications devoted exclusively to artists represented in the Compagnie de l'Art Brut, with the aim of supplementing the collection with documentation of the works.²⁶ To prepare his article, Dubuffet analysed Laure's drawings in detail: he set them out in chronological order, described them (often briefly), and selected the ones he wished to be reproduced in the future booklet. He also deciphered the words and names included in the drawings and any separately written messages. His study chiefly concentrated on the works from Laure Pigeon's early years, which were mostly drawings in sketchbooks. The large blue compositions made between 1953 and 1964 are under-represented in relation to their frequency in the corpus. Oddly, the title of his article – 'La double vie de Laure' – does not include the artist's surname, although it is mentioned in the first paragraph and in an alternate title – 'Until second of Laure Pigeon' – found in his handwritten notes. In these writings, Laure's surname is not left unmentioned, as was done for those Art Brut artists who had spent time in psychiatric hospitals, and therefore whose identities were concealed for reasons of medical confidentiality. Nevertheless, for a long time Laure Pigeon's work was presented under her first name alone.²⁷

At the time of their acquisition in 1965, Laure Pigeon's drawings were exhibited at the premises of the Compagnie de l'Art Brut on Rue de Sévres in Paris, where access was deliberately restricted. Wishing to 'protect' his discoveries from the eyes of the uninitiated, Dubuffet explained his attitude to Lily Lombard in these terms: 'I am always astounded by your sister-in-law's drawings, and I am not the only one – many people around me are also very impressed by her works. However, the Art Brut collections are not open to the public. Visits can only be made on request and by qualified individuals. I believe that the organisation's activities should be

pas seul dans ce cas : beaucoup de gens de mon entourage sont aussi très impressionnés par ces œuvres. Cependant les collections de l'Art Brut ne sont pas ouvertes au public. La visite n'en est permise que sur demande, à des personnes qualifiées. Je crois bon que l'activité de l'organisation soit préservée de la publicité. Je crois que Laure Pigeon aurait approuvé qu'il en soit ainsi, et que l'accès à ses œuvres ne soit pas limité au grand public, mais réservé à des personnes susceptibles de les apprécier pleinement²⁸.

Il avait néanmoins accepté l'invitation de son ami François Mathy, directeur du musée des Arts décoratifs de Paris, qui souhaitait organiser une grande exposition consacrée à sa collection. C'est ainsi qu'entre le 7 avril et le 5 juin 1967, vingt mille personnes découvrent une sélection d'environ sept cents peintures, dessins et sculptures d'Art Brut. Le travail de Laure Pigeon y est représenté par un nombre important de dessins et de cahiers, de périodes différentes, et l'une de ses grandes compositions à l'encre bleue est choisie pour l'affiche. La presse écrite couvre largement cet événement qui constitue un moment capital dans l'histoire de l'Art Brut et de sa réception. Parmi les nombreux articles, on relève quelques commentaires d'admiration à propos de notre créatrice : « Les œuvres les plus saisissantes sont dues à Laure Pigeon, une solitaire, qui en cachette, jusqu'à sa mort à 83 ans, exécuta en état médiumnique d'admirables dessins à l'encre à stylo. Ce sont des chefs-d'œuvre que l'on peut confronter avec certains dessins de Paul Klee²⁹. » Et dans un autre article : « Aux inventions de Laure, vieille spiritée, qui dessinait encore à 83 ans, quelle Marie-Laure, quel Hartung, quel Henri Michaux pourrait avec succès affronter ses fabrications littéraires ? Une seule mère : l'encre, bleue ou violette, lui suffisait pour faire grouiller de vie tout un monde de collages à fines nervures, d'épingles, de coraux, de roseaux aux tiges articulées, entrelacées de nids d'oiseaux, dont la variété, les ajours, les effets de transparence, n'ont point d'équivalent dans la peinture d'aujourd'hui³⁰. » Si les comparaisons avec les œuvres de Paul Klee, Hans Hartung ou Henri Michaux semblent peu pertinentes, on retient néanmoins le ton enthousiaste, voire dithyrambique, des deux



withheld from public awareness. I think Laure Pigeon would have approved of this arrangement – that access to her works should not be granted to the public as a whole but reserved for those able to appreciate them properly²⁸.

He had nevertheless accepted the invitation made by his friend François Mathy, the director of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, who wished to organise a major exhibition

La Collection de l'Art Brut installée
rue de Sévres, Paris, vers 1965.
Archives de la Collection
de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

The Collection de l'Art Brut
on Rue de Sévres, Paris, ca. 1965.
Archives de la Collection
de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

Affiche de l'exposition
L'Art Brut présentée au musée
des Arts décoratifs, Paris,
du 7 avril au 5 juin 1967.
Archives de la Collection
de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

Poster of the exhibition
L'Art Brut held at the Musée
des Arts Décoratifs, Paris,
du 7 avril au 5 juin 1967.
Archives de la Collection
de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

EXCERPTS FROM THE PUBLICATION

LAURE PIGEON, INFINITE BLUE

Préface – by Sarah Lombardi, Director of the Collection de l'Art Brut

[...]

Laure Pigeon's artistic production began with her rarely published black-ink drawings, whose ethereal compositions are characterized by lines that still appear exploratory. From these, she progressed to drawings of lacelike motifs in blue ink, sinuously interwoven with inscriptions and female figures. Her production culminated in larger and much denser compositions in which images and inscriptions became inseparable and sometimes merged entirely into one. We know from the artist herself, who almost systematically dated her works, that she commenced drawing in 1935 and ceased in 1964, a year before her death.

Jean Dubuffet, who originated the concept of Art Brut, was the first to be enthralled by Laure Pigeon's drawings, which he was able to save from destruction by acquiring them for his collection in 1965. He considered her production a prime example of Art Brut, and in 1967 he chose one of her drawings from among seven hundred works exhibited at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris to grace the poster designed for the first museum exhibition of Art Brut. He also wrote a detailed study of her work, which was published in 1966 in the sixth *L'Art Brut* booklet by the Compagnie de l'Art Brut in Paris.

Although at that time Jean Dubuffet believed that he had acquired Laure Pigeon's entire corpus, numbering 443 drawings, the file held in the archives of the Lausanne museum reveals that seven drawings were purchased from a private collector in 1987 by Michel Thévoz, the museum's first director when it opened in 1976. Thus, the total number of works now held in the Collection de l'Art Brut is 450. Aside from the visual power of Laure Pigeon's drawings, we must be aware of their therapeutic significance for their creator and their value as a personal journal. As she pointed out, one of their functions was to 'repair past lives' and to find a possible path to the beyond that would enable her to reconnect with those she had loved and lost too soon: above all her mother Alida, who died when Laure was only five years old, her husband Edmond, whom she had left in 1933 after discovering his infidelity and who would die in 1953, a year after he returned to live with her, and the Apostle Peter, whom she believed she had been married to in a previous life. Through her self-taught artistic practice, which she pursued in almost total solitude, Laure Pigeon endeavoured to produce evidence of the survival of those people who had gone before her.

For this reason, she sometimes inserted their first names in her compositions or transcribed in her spirit messages the 'conversations' she had with them, whose content had the power to assuage the deep pain she suffered as a result of their loss.

[...]

The Enigmas of Laure Pigeon

by Anic Zanzi, curator at the Collection de l'Art Brut

[...]

Infinite Blue

Laure Pigeon began drawing late, at the age of fifty-three, and continued to do so until the year before her death. She dated almost all her drawings, and even sometimes specified the dates she started and ended them. Other spirit artists do the same thing, as though to indicate the moment their encounter with the spirits occurred. Several interruptions to her production are also noticeable, for which we do not know the reasons. They may have been caused by events in her personal life, by the war, by some shortage or a lack of financial means to buy materials, or the lack of works may have been because they were destroyed.

Right from the outset, Laure mainly used blue ink. Until 1951, her preference was for lines, which in places resemble a thread or yarn either knitted or knotted, or a ribbon folded many times over. It often ran to the very edge of the page, with intricate and delicate interlacing, leaving glimpses of the paper beneath the dense lattice of lines. Profiles of women are occasionally apparent – one of the rare figurative motifs in her work – and elsewhere, words and names can be read. Many pages of her sketchbooks are covered with drawings mixed with writing. The unbroken line sometimes forms lengthy texts in which letters dance across the page.

Beginning in 1953, an important change took place: Laure Pigeon abandoned sketchbooks for the exclusive use of large sheets of paper (50 × 65 cm), a development that also and above all extended to her style. Around two hundred large compositions made in blue ink, which she created at a steady pace over a decade, represent approximately half of her total production. For Jean Dubuffet, these drawings 'without a doubt represent the true harvest of her work, for which all her earlier drawings were merely preliminaries'. By the same token, Lise Maurer commented, 'Here, Laure reached her full maturity'. These works form an exceptional body of work that reveals both the confidence of her artistry and the affirmation of a distinctive artistic practice. Each drawing is of the same high quality, to the point that the question arises of whether Laure herself made a selection of these works, retaining only those she considered the most successful.

In this last series, the dense forms are composed of smaller forms comprising countless lines, like skeins of thread. Dubuffet praised the craftsmanship of these large blue compositions greatly: 'Her new technique is very impressive. It is remarkable that she seems to have brought it to perfection immediately and without experimentation, and she remained true to it from that point on. She achieved all sorts of subtly varied effects, which she administered with extraordinary dexterity. We are reminded of Lily's remark that Laure was very clumsy and unskilled in artistic work, an incredible comment in view of these works, in which powerful invention goes hand in hand with astonishing manual skill. Even with full concentration and the use of a magnifying glass, it is not at all clear how these finely striated, fibrous textures – sometimes suggestive of marquetry in

precious wood – were actually produced. She probably worked on moistened paper. It seems that fine scratches were made in some of her works using a sharp point, though not in all of them. The impression is given that the work involved was carried out with great ease and assurance. We are told that Laure used nothing but her stylograph and never employed a brush.' Like Dubuffet, we are dazzled by Laure Pigeon's manual dexterity and still wonder how she achieved such results. This is especially true of the flat tints between the lines, where the use of a damp brush to dilute the ink seems to have been indispensable. This suggests the possibility of a two-stage process, thus a somewhat complex technique whose mystery and magic remain.

It is unknown if Laure Pigeon studied or engaged in some kind of professional work, and unclear how she supported herself before her marriage at the age of thirty-four. She launched herself into a creative practice without experience or artistic instruction, and thus acquired her skills and a true aptitude through nothing but practice. Unlike the common practice in Art Brut of recycling salvaged materials, Laure procured specific supplies for her work: sketchbooks, large-format watermarked paper made by different companies, and ink. She made a few attempts on canvas, which rightly she must have judged unsatisfactory. Her work demonstrates clear determination even though she never dared to call herself an artist, except through the messages dictated by the spirits.

For Jean Dubuffet, Laure Pigeon's drawings were 'a long hymn to death'. She summoned the absent and communicated with the dead. While her work clearly had a therapeutic value that allowed her to 'atone for previous lives' by allowing different processes of mourning to play out, creation also offered her great freedom to express her vital impetus. In the infinitely blue, Laure Pigeon revealed herself.

MEDIA VISUALS

All images : Atelier de numérisation – Ville de Lausanne (AN), Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne



untitled, 21 February 1936
blue ink on paper
24 x 32 cm



untitled, 11 December 1953
blue ink on paper
49 x 64 cm



untitled, 25 March 1960
blue ink on paper
62 x 48,5 cm



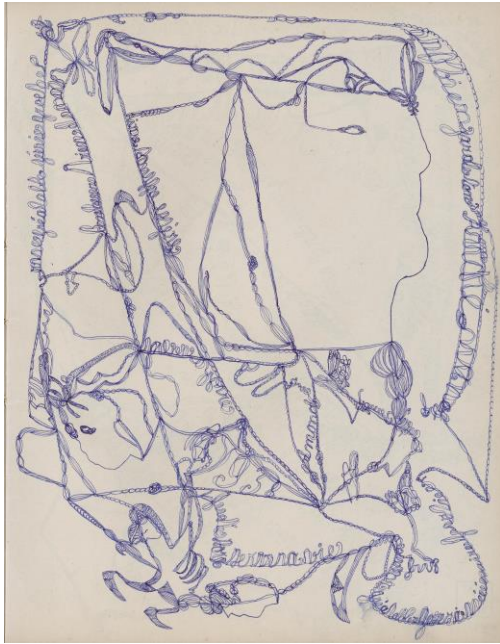
untitled [Pierre], 13 February 1957
blue ink on paper
65 x 50 cm



untitled, 12 July 1959
blue ink on paper
50 x 65 cm



untitled, 18 April 1956
blue ink on paper
50 x 65 cm



untitled [sketchbook no. 2], August–November 1938
blue ink on paper
31 x 48 cm (open)



untitled, 9 May 1958
blue ink on paper
65 x 50 cm



untitled, 10 November 1961
blue ink and ballpoint pen on paper
65 x 50 cm



untitled, 15 May 1953
blue ink on paper
31,5 x 24,5 cm

EXHIBITION EVENTS

Sneak preview guided tour **Thursday 9 October 2025, 10:30am**
for the press **By Anic Zanzi, curator**
At the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne
Booking : sophie.guyot@lausanne.ch

Public opening **Thursday 9 October 2025, 6:30pm**
Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

Free guided tours **Saturday 8 November 2025, 2:30pm**
By Anic Zanzi, curator at **Saturday 24 January 2026, 2:30pm**
the Collection de l'Art Brut

Free guided tours **Tuesday 4 November, 6pm (45 min)**
for teachers

Workshops for kids **Saturday 8 November 2025, 2pm** Length: *1h45*
(aged 6 -12) **Saturday 17 January 2026, 2pm** admission: 10.- per child
Saturday 24 January 2026, 2pm

Discussion **Saturday 8 November 2025, 3:30pm**

Laure Pigeon and women In the presence of Cécile Cunin (PhD student, Rennes II),
in the field of Art Brut. Michel Thévoz (first director of the Collection de l'Art Brut),
Anic Zanzi (curator and exhibition organiser).
Hosted by Eleanor Philippoz (museum mediator and art historian)

Every first Saturday of the month The guides of the Collection del Art Brut invite you to a
meeting with a work at 2:30pm and 3:30pm (20 min).
Free admission and tour.

Private tours Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm
Advance booking required for School groups can also book for Thursdays at 9:30am
groups of six and more

- School, preschool and extracurricular groups
- Tertiary students
- Adults

Guided tours Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm
Advance booking required School groups can also book for Thursdays at 9:30am

- School groups age 6+
- Tertiary students
- Adults

Languages: French, German, English, Italian

Contact and ticketing for all tours *www.artbrut.ch > tickets or 021/ 315 25 70 subject to availability*
and workshops

USEFUL INFORMATION

Press material download visuals and the press kit: www.artbrut.ch, menu: press

Media contact Sophie Guyot
Tel. +41 21 315 25 84 (Tuesday, Wednesday morning, Thursday)
sophie.guyot@lausanne.ch

Address Collection de l'Art Brut
Avenue des Bergières 11
CH – 1004 Lausanne
www.artbrut.ch
Tel. +41 21 315 25 70
art.brut@lausanne.ch

Opening hours Tuesday–Sunday: 11am – 6pm
including public holidays
Closed on 25 December 2025 and 1 January 2026
On 24 and 31 December 2025, open from 11:00 to 17:00
Admission free the first Saturday of each month

Entrance fee Fr. 12.-
Concessions: Fr. 6.-
Groups of 6: Fr. 6.-
Jobseekers and under-16s: free
No entrance fee the first Saturday of every month

Access **Bus**
From St-François: Line 2, get off at Beaulieu-Jomini.
From the CFF station: Lines 3 and 21, get off at Beaulieu-Jomini.
On foot: 25 min. from the station, 10 min. from Place de la Riponne.
By car: autoroute, exit Lausanne-Blécherette, follow Palais de Beaulieu. Parking lot Beaulieu.
Reduced mobility:
The Collection de l'Art Brut has an elevator
All the temporary exhibitions are accessible for people with reduced mobility

THE COLLECTION DE L'ART BRUT
THANKS FOR THEIR SUPPORT :

Fondation
Guignard