

The French Pictures

Renaud Jerez | January 20th – March 19th, 2025

The mystic visions of Hildegard von Bingen were long understood as moments of divine intervention — or, later, as the physiological afterimage of persistent migraines. What she described was not revelation received through the body, but pictures appearing beyond it: images seen while fully awake, her outward eyes open, yet perceived only in the soul.

Writing at the age of seventy-seven to the monk Guibert of Gembloux, Hildegard explained how her inner sight rose into the vault of heaven and dispersed itself among distant peoples and places. These were not sounds heard, nor thoughts formed, nor sensations gathered through the five senses, but visions unfolding internally — luminous, unstable, hovering like flame or cloud. She saw them day and night, often while sick, exhausted, and in pain so severe it threatened to undo her. Still, the pictures persisted: a light “far brighter than a cloud carrying the sun,” images demanding to be recorded.

Centuries later, the historian of science Charles Singer would look again at these visions and recognize something else within them. Reading Hildegard’s descriptions, he identified forms familiar to modern neurology: the scintillating scotoma of migraine, the fractured geometry of nervous disturbance. What had once been understood as revelation became, in his account, a different kind of image — not sent from above, but generated within.

Between divine vision and medical diagnosis, the picture remains unresolved. What persists is the image itself: unstable, radiant, difficult to locate. In *French Pictures*, Renaud Jerez inhabits this uncertainty — where images are neither fully symbolic nor purely clinical, neither hallucination nor representation. Pictures emerge as visions without origin, surfaces charged with belief, distortion, and desire — fragments that hover between seeing and knowing, faith and interference.

Here, the picture is not what explains the world, but what interrupts it.