



George Rouy, *Meditations II*, 2026 (detail)

© George Rouy / Courtesy the artist and Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK
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The Holy See's Dicastery for Culture and education announces a one-Year Contemporary Art Programme curated by Donatien Grau. First exhibition *Presence in Form* by George Rouy opens 20 March 2026

Curated by internationally acclaimed art historian and philologist, Donatien Grau, the series *Leggere, di nuovo (Read, Again)*, will be a year-long reflection on the act of reading by leading contemporary artists.

British artist George Rouy will present the first exhibition, *Presence in Form*, which will open at the Holy See's Conciliazione 5, Rome on 20 March 2026.

For Conciliazione 5, George Rouy has created a new site-specific painting and accompanying soundwork. Known for his dynamic, layered paintings, for this new work Rouy invites the viewer to engage with the act of reading a painting as if it were a text, embracing the palimpsestic nature of his work. Concurrent with his painting practice, Rouy has been working with sound and creating music, collaborating with musicians and performers. Confronting this practice for the first time, to accompany his painting for Conciliazione 5, Rouy has created a sound work made from audiobooks he listened to while making the painting. The sound piece will be released once a day on the street and will be available via a QRCode.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a special digital project on the artist's and Conciliazione 5's Instagram platform, there by opening up a different situation for the experience of art and reading alike.

George Rouy
Presence in Form

Leggere, di nuovo, 1

Opening
20 March 2026

Opening event
Friday 20 March, 6 pm

Conciliazione 5,
Via della Conciliazione,
Rome, Italy

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George Rouy (b. 1994, Sittingbourne, Kent, UK). Lives and works in Faversham, Kent. Since graduating from Camberwell College of Arts in 2016, he has exhibited internationally, including: Copistes, a collaborative exhibition between the Musée du Louvre and Centre Pompidou-Metz, Paris, France (2025); States of Being, Société, Berlin, Germany (2025); Visions of the World, Kampa Museum, Prague, Czech Republic (2025); The Bleed, Part II, Hauser & Wirth, Los Angeles CA (2025); The Bleed, Part I, Hauser & Wirth, London, UK (2024); Present Tense, Hauser & Wirth Somerset, UK (2024); The Echo of Picasso, Museo Picasso Málaga, Málaga, Spain (2023); Endless Song, Nicola Vassell Gallery, New York NY (2023); BODYSUIT, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2023); Belly Ache, Almine Rech, Paris, France (2022); Real Corporeal, Gladstone Gallery, New York NY (2022); A Thing for the Mind, Timothy Taylor Gallery, London, UK (2022); Shit Mirror, Peres Projects, Berlin, Germany (2022); Rested, Nicola Vassell, New York NY (2021); Clot, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2020) and Squeeze Hard Enough It Might Just Pop!, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2018). First opened in February 2025 and named after its address in Rome, Conciliazione 5 is the first space dedicated to contemporary art of the Holy See's Dicastery for Culture and Education. The space is open 24 hours a day on Via della Conciliazione allowing all visitors to view the works on display.

Donatien Grau is a philologist. A scholar of the Ancient Roman Empire, he is the author of *Néron en Occident* (Gallimard, 2015); *La Mémoire numismatique de l'Empire romain* (Les Belles Lettres, 2022) and *De Civitate Angelorum* (Yvon Lambert, 2023). In his work as a literary thinker, he has authored studies such as *Tout contre Sainte-Beuve* (Grasset, 2013); *Dans la bibliothèque de la vie* (Grasset, 2019) and *Un Autoportrait* (LeSeuil, 2024). As a conversation-partner to artists, he has curated dozens of exhibitions, written and edited essays and publications. A leading museum scholar, he is notably the author of *Living Museums* (Hatje Cantz, 2020) and *Under Discussion. The Encyclopedic Museum* (Getty, 2021). He handled the transformation of Azzedine Alaïa's exhibition space into an institution prior to the passing of the couturier, his close friend, and has served as head of contemporary programmes at the Musée d'Orsay and then at the Louvre. He is the co-founder, editor-in-chief and artistic director of the magazine *Alphabet*.

The Dicastery for Culture and Education is the department of the Roman Curia entrusted with relations with the contemporary art world, listening to its protagonists, and engaging in collaborative dialogue on the major questions of the present. Among its various initiatives, the DCE organizes the Holy See's participation in the Venice Biennale and manages the Conciliazione 5 space, a platform open to contemporary art.

Via della Conciliazione 5, Roma
Instagram [@conciliazione5](https://www.instagram.com/conciliazione5)