

Press Release

## Irma Blank: Life Time

24 March – 20 May 2017

Opening: Thursday 23 March, 6 – 8pm

*Writing is the home of being. I free writing from sense and highlight its structure, its skeleton, the nude sign, the sign that is such and does not refer back to anything but itself. It refers to the energy reserve, to the initial drive, the source-giving urge, the desire to reveal itself, to emerge from the secret, closed place of night.*

**Irma Blank, 2001**

Alison Jacques Gallery is pleased to present the second solo exhibition at the gallery by Irma Blank (b. 1934, Celle, Germany). This exhibition comprises selections from two major bodies of work - the *Avant-testo* series (begun in the late 1990s) and the *Global Writings* series (2000 to present). Blank's work will feature in the forthcoming 57th Venice Biennale, curated by Christine Macel.

Since the late 1960s, Blank's singular production has focused on the recording of time as gesture. In her drawings and paintings time is inscribed as a material record of life through the material traces of the artist's labour. Located between drawing and writing, the work evokes the space of the book but encompasses paintings on canvas and paper, screenprints and drawings in pastel, pencil and ink.

Although Blank's work is structured in series with distinct titles, she describes her practice as a continuum in which one body of work develops from another. With the *Avant-testo* series, the earlier of the two presented here, Blank first disrupted the linear logic of the written word. These heavily worked ink drawings describe time as a circular movement, beginning and ending with the artist.

In contrast, the later *Global Writings* series sees a return to the visual parameters of language. In these works Blank draws upon an alphabet of eight consonants, legible but not comprehensible. Blank emphasises the closeness of writing to drawing, and, stripping it of content, opens it to the possibility of new meanings.

Blank shares some formal and conceptual approaches to language with other artists who emerged in the 1960s, such as Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner. Her ritualistic indexing of time has drawn comparisons with Hanne Darboven and On Kawara. Her work is, however, distinguished from her contemporaries by an almost performative approach to painting and drawing. Rather than represent or document, Blank uses repetition to embody a notion of time as lived by the artist.

At a time of ever-accelerating consumption Blank offers a rare moment of slowness. Through her careful observation of time passing she unites life and art as time spent, asking important questions about the role of the artist and what it means to be alive.

German by birth but residing in Italy since the late 1950s, Irma Blank lives and works in Milan. Forthcoming solo shows include *Schrift und Linie/Scrittura e disegno*, Museion, Bolzano. Forthcoming group shows include *Viva Arte Viva*, 57th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia curated by Christine Macel and *Colori*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin.

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