

|ROSEMARIE | IRMA||| |CASTORO||| | BLANK

MARTIN ARNULF BARRÉI RAINERI

Opening October 8, 2019 (6 pm)

October 9, 2019-February 2, 2020





PRESS RELEASE

What is an image? And what do the images that engulf us daily want? These questions, posed over the past twenty years in the field of "visual studies," invite us to consider images not only in terms of their existence as objects, and their meaning, but also in terms of their relationship to the society in which they are produced. We have long characterized the work of a particular artist by her/his technique, but must now accept that the medium is more than a work's materials or its message: it is the ensemble of practices that have brought the work into existence, i.e. not only the canvas, stretcher and paint, but also the studio, gallery, and/ or museum, the art market, and the critics.

From challenges to conventional "fine art" categorizations, to ontological shifts in the realm of the "visual," exhibitions at MAMCO in 2019 explore this evolving concept of the image.

This fall, the museum constructs a typology of pictorial gestures and signs through four experimental practices. Thus MAMCO traces a unique path through the history of post-war painting, with retrospectives of the work of Martin Barré and Rosemarie Castoro, a major exhibition of work by Irma Blank and an ensemble of pieces by Arnulf Rainer (the Foëx donation). The replacement of brushwork by the use of spray, the extension of painting to the body and the space, the liberation of language from meaning, or the covering-over of preexisting images are just some of the tropes on show—"gestures" that remind us that artists think above all in forms, that cannot be properly looked at and apprehended until they are understood as such.

Mirabaud's gift: in 2019, MAMCO is free for all

Admission to the museum will be free of charge throughout 2019, thanks to a generous gift from Mirabaud, in celebration of the company's 200th anniversary.

The gift furthers Mirabaud's commitment to MAMCO as part of the company's growing involvement in contemporary art. As a partner company to MAMCO since 2017, Mirabaud supports the museum's development activities, in particular the project 'In Course of Acquisition'. Free admission to MAMCO in 2019 reflects the museum's determination to make contemporary art accessible to the widest possible public. We thank Mirabaud for their support in implementing this policy of outreach and sharing.

IRMA BLANK

The exhibition, curated by Johana Carrier and Joana P. R. Neves, is organized in collaboration with Culturgest, Lisbon; CAPC, Bordeaux; CCA, Tel Aviv; ICA, Milan; Museo Villa Dei Cedri, Bellinzona, ICA Milan, and BombasGens Centre d'Art, Valencia. The exhibition benefits from the support of Q-International, a grant by Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma.

A passionate reader and a lover of language, Irma Blank (b. 1934), met her Italian husband in her home country of Germany, and moved with him to Sicily. The experience of deracination (both geographical and linguistic) became the foundation of her work. Her discovery that "there is no such thing as the right word" influenced her first abstract series, Eigenschriften ("self-writings") at the end of the 1960s. Rooted in the process of writing itself, the series captures the experience of self-reflection through intense concentration.

This intimate work, sprawling across numerous pages, led to the *Trascrizioni*, in which she copied the appearance of text rather than its letters, words, and sentences. She transposed the typology of different text blocks, in newspapers or poetry books, in pursuit of her work's central aim to strip words of their meaning and establish a choreography of presence.

Irma Blank considers all her work autobiographical, a form of "universal writing" in which drawing sets language free from meaning. The line empties the word, and creates a form of universal transmission. Color is also intrinsic to her work: "there is always color," she explains, "but there is never coloring." Blue is the quintessential color for her, connected with the sky and hand-writing, expressing both the individual response to the skyscape and self-absorption in the act of writing.

The exhibition connects Blank's first and last series: Global Writings and Gehen. For the latter, the right-handed artist Irma Blank was forced by health problems to learn how to draw with her left hand. The experience led to a rediscovery of line and its dance with the body, through slowed-down choreography. Book Crossings and Global Crossing (from the Global Writings series) delve into letters

and texts, specifically "hdjt ljr," the seminal ensemble of letters forming Irma Blank's own invented language.

Like many women of her generation, Irma Blank's work has been overlooked for too long, and is now garnering the attention it deserves.

IRMA BLANK



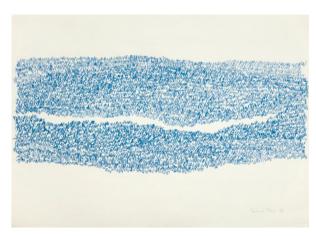
Irma Blank, *Eigenschriften, Senza titolo*, 1970 court. the artist and P420, Bologna photo: Carlo Favero



Irma Blank, *Trascrizioni, Vom Unmöglichen* (Dell'impossibile), 1975 court. the artist and P420, Bologna photo: Carlo Favero



Irma Blank in her studio, 1972



Irma Blank, *Eigenschriften, Senza titolo*, 1968 court. the artist and P420, Bologna photo: Carlo Favero



MAMCO is overseen by FONDAMCO, which is made up of FONDATION MAMCO, the Canton, and City of Geneva.

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Monday: closed Tuesday–Friday: 12-6pm Saturday–Sunday: 11-6pm

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