

Michael Venezia

Venezia a Napoli

January 13th – February 24th 2024

Alfonso Artiaco is pleased to announce the opening of the first solo show by Michael Venezia, entitled Venezia in Naples.

The exhibition opens on Friday, January 12th, from 7 pm.

Michael Venezia formed in the minimalist conceptual New York environments of the late 1960s early 1970s with artists such as Robert Ryman, Dan Flavin and Sol LeWitt. While the latter led their research more toward sculpture and installation, Venezia has always been focused on painting.

He began his production by making vertically developed works and he was among the first artists to work with a spray gun on canvas, introducing the randomness of spray painting into a dimension of calculated composition. Over time his interest shifted from the center to the margins.

During a visit to his trusted framer in Umbria, near his residence, the artist saw an oak stump on the floor and decided to purchase it. When he reached the studio, he painted only one long side of it. Thus the base of the work thins out. The paint migrates from the wide canvas to the squared piece of wood, mindful of the frame. For the artist, the wooden block represents a new surface that narrows the field of vision.

The American artist makes his first entry into the gallery with works belonging to the so-called *Block Painting* series. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the wooden fragments are not sculptures, because the painted area is only one and the eye tends to focus on it without wandering in search of depth, given by the material. By composing the works with three elements, the artist explicitly refers to the religious triptychs of the Gothic period, especially those made by Giotto and Cimabue.

His works are not based on a predefined plan but on randomness. The wooden blocks are often painted at first and then stored waiting to be picked up by the artist afterwards, even years later. Venezia is driven by intuition to bring the pieces together. The work is defined when the artist chooses the composition. The viewer sees moments of life and research dialoguing in a continuity that seems programmed, but indeed each part is the origin or evolution of the other.

Michael Venezia was born in 1935 in Brooklyn, USA

He studied art with Peter Busa at State University College of New York in Buffalo, USA.

Michael Venezia is widely considered to have played a major role in the renewal of painting in the 1960s. Back then, together with artist colleagues such as Dan Flavin, Robert Ryman, or Sol LeWitt, Venezia shared the opinion that routine and narcissism had become predominant in Abstract Expressionism, tendencies which they aimed to overcome and transcend. At the end of the 1960s Michael Venezia thus discovered the spray-paint gun as an adequate means to leave behind the gestural and handwritten touch of the brushstroke. Another important step was the reduction of the picture plane to a long narrow wooden bar. Until today, Venezia has remained faithful to this image format on which - by applying new techniques and combining several bars - he continues to achieve new and surprising painterly qualities.