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NOTHING TO READ

JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT · IRMA BLANK · ALIGHIERO BOETTI · BETTY DANON · MIRTHA DERMISACHE · ON KAWARA · JIRI KOLAR · MICHAEL KREBBER · GLENN LIGON · HENRI MICHAUX · ROMAN OPAŁKA · MIMMO ROTELLA ·GARY SIMMONS · CHRISTOPHER WOOL

19.10 - 19.12.2026

Opening Monday October 19th, 2026 from 5pm to 9pm
95, rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, Paris VIIIe

Mitterrand is pleased to present Nothing to Read, a group exhibition bringing together Jean-Michel Basquiat, Irma Blank, Alighiero Boetti, Betty Danon, Mirtha Dermisache, On Kawara, Jiří Kolář, Michael Krebber, Glenn Ligon, Henri Michaux, Roman Opałka, Mimmo Rotella, Gary Simmons and Christopher Wool to explore the relationships between writing, language and image.

What remains of writing when it no longer offers anything to read? Across different practices and generations, the artists brought together in *Nothing to Read* divert writing from its primary function of communication to explore its visual, material and temporal dimensions. The letter becomes line, the word becomes form, and repetition becomes rhythm. Whether erased, fragmented or rendered illegible, language remains present, yet resists immediate interpretation.

In the work of Irma Blank, Mirtha Dermisache, Betty Danon and Henri Michaux, writing becomes detached from meaning, existing instead as gesture and trace. Signs, graphic marks and invented scripts occupy the surface without necessarily giving rise to a legible language. In 1974, the Italian art critic and theorist Gillo Dorfles described Irma Blank's work as "asemantic writing": the sign no longer conveys a concept, but exists in and of itself. Writing thus becomes a physical act, in which the hand, breath and duration take the place of the word.

This bodily presence finds an echo in the work of Alighiero Boetti, who wrote that "what always speaks in silence is the body." Dorfles also drew a parallel between the two artists' use of a measured and obsessive manual gesture, repeated until the time devoted to the work is made visible. Yet in the work of both Blank and Boetti, repetition never entirely erases the individual: variations, irregularities and accidents inscribe a presence within the system itself. This relationship with time is extended in a different way by On Kawara and Roman Opałka, for whom dates and numbers

become traces of lived duration.

Elsewhere, language remains recognisable, but its legibility becomes unsettled. In Glenn Ligon's work, words are repeated and layered until they oscillate between text and image; in Mimmo Rotella's, letters and typographic fragments emerge from torn posters like the remnants of an already altered language. Whether invented, repeated, counted, erased or fragmented, text acquires a presence that extends beyond what it signifies.

Nothing to Read occupies this interval, in which writing remains recognisable, yet reading alone is no longer enough. The works brought together invite us to look at language as much as to seek to understand it: as a line, a gesture, an imprint or a duration. There is thus "nothing to read," even as writing is everywhere.

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