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THIS IS NO FANTASY

Jo Plank: A Line at a Time

Statement

Works

Jo Plank transforms language, memory, and intimate experience into intricate works on paper. Through the repetition of handwritten words and lines, private thoughts accumulate into abstract fields, rhythms, and forms. At once rigorous and deeply personal, her works reward close looking, revealing fragments of language embedded within surfaces that initially appear minimalist.



[View works \(9\)](#)

Jo Plank
Wish I Didn't Miss You, 2024
US\$6,600

A line at a time, private thoughts become abstract forms. Repetition transforms language into rhythm, memory into material, and everyday experience into something both intimate and universal.

Jo Plank's works begin with the most elemental of gestures: a line, a word, a repeated phrase. From these modest beginnings emerge intricate fields of handwritten marks that sit between drawing, writing, abstraction, and personal record.

Working predominantly in ink on archival and Japanese papers, Plank uses repetition as both method and subject. Words and phrases are written again and again until their linguistic meaning begins to dissolve. From a distance, they appear as currents, clouds, blocks, horizons, or densely worked abstract forms. Only through close inspection does language emerge from the surface, revealing the personal narratives concealed within.

Plank's practice is grounded in lived experience. Love, loss, friendship, family, conversations, frustration, desire, and the ordinary rituals of daily life become material for making. In her 2021 exhibition *So Here's The Thing*, hours spent talking with friends were translated into works such as 22 phone calls and 92 phone calls, while emotionally direct titles including *Loved Up*, *Fuck The Past* and *I Don't Need you I want you I choose you* offered glimpses into otherwise private moments.

By *Nulla Dies Sine Linea* in 2023, repetition had developed into an increasingly ritualistic and meditative practice. The exhibition title translates as "no day without a line," encapsulating Plank's commitment to the cumulative act of making. Each repeated gesture resembles the last but remains individual, a unique echo within a larger whole.

There is a compelling tension in Plank's work between restraint and emotional intensity. Her visual language recalls the disciplined repetition of Agnes Martin, the psychological intimacy of Louise Bourgeois, and the gestural immediacy of Cy Twombly, artists Plank identifies as important influences.

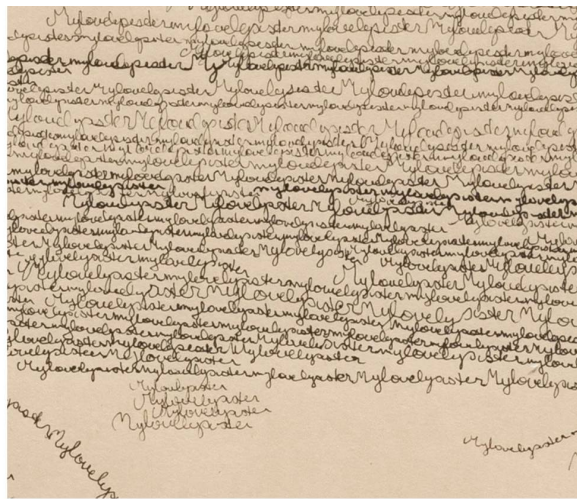
Ultimately, these works operate like private texts made public. They invite the viewer closer, rewarding attention with an intimate encounter in which language becomes image and repetition becomes a way of processing, remembering, and letting go.

Words Become Images

At first glance, Plank's works appear abstract: fields of line, shifting densities, currents, and delicate forms. Move closer and another register emerges.

Tiny handwritten words and repeated phrases build the image mark by mark.

Language is simultaneously concealed and exposed, transforming private thought into a visual experience that unfolds slowly through looking.



Jo Plank, My Lovely Sister 2, 2022, detail

Repetition as Ritual

Repetition is central to Plank's practice.

A phrase may be written hundreds or thousands of times, becoming a meditative action through which emotion is gradually processed and transformed.

No two marks are quite identical.

Accumulated across the paper, these small variations give the works their rhythm, texture, and sense of time passing.



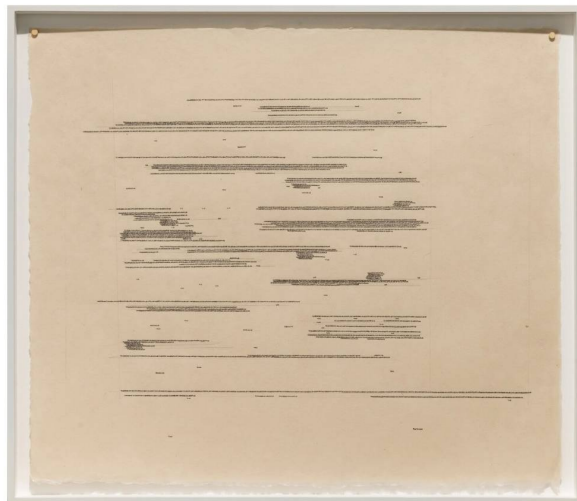
Jo Plank, An Ordinary Day With You, 2023

Love, Loss and Everyday Life

Plank draws her subjects from lived experience: relationships, family, friendship, longing, grief, conversations, and ordinary moments of happiness.

Titles offer intimate clues without fully explaining the image.

Works such as You Are My Person, Warmed My Soul With You and The Residue of Us turn emotional fragments into understated records of attachment and change.



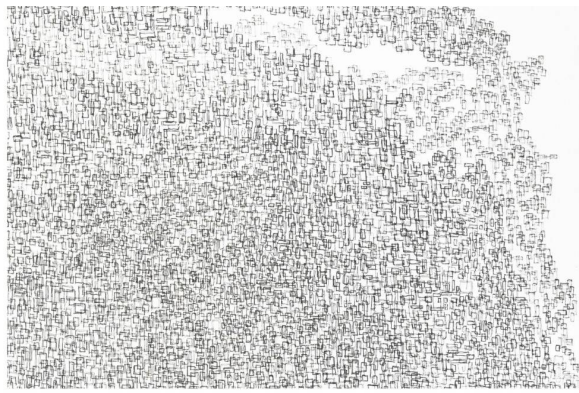
Jo Plank, The Residue of Us, 2022

Conversations Made Visible

Conversation becomes a form of measurement in Plank's earlier works.

Titles such as 22 phone calls and 92 phone calls record exchanges with friends during periods of emotional intensity.

Hours of speaking, listening, and searching for meaning are translated into accumulations of ink, giving physical form to experiences that would otherwise disappear once the conversation ends.



92 phone calls (Chrissie Anitsa Angie Jenny Paul Jorgen), 2021

Intimacy in the Detail

Plank's works deliberately change according to viewing distance.

From across a room they can appear quiet, restrained, even austere.

Up close, their apparent simplicity dissolves into thousands of intensely worked marks and fragments of language.

This shift between distance and intimacy makes looking itself part of the work, drawing the viewer gradually into a private world.



Jo Plank, Just you and me, 2021

The Materiality of Paper

Paper is not simply a support in Plank's practice.

Its edges, texture, scale, translucency, and imperfections determine how each work develops.

She works across archival and Japanese papers, allowing the delicacy of the material to contrast with the intensity and duration of her mark-making.

The finite sheet gives physical boundaries to thoughts and emotions that might otherwise feel endless.



Jo Plank, Don't Tell Me What To Do, 2023. Photography: Simon Strong

No Day Without a Line

through persistence and routine, making what was a daily ritual, with each line continuing an unending story yet, the result is never mechanical: every mark carries the small variations of the hand, body, mood, and moment in which it was made.



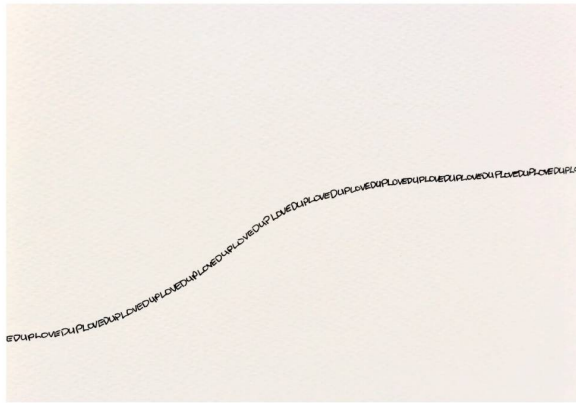
Jo Plank, 2023. Photography: Simon Strong

Between Minimalism and Emotion

Plank creates a productive tension between formal restraint and emotional candour.

Her sparse palette, repetition, and precise mark-making suggest minimalist traditions, while the words embedded within the works are intensely personal.

The result is neither diary nor pure abstraction, but a space where discipline and vulnerability, control and feeling, exist together.



Jo Plank, Loved Up, 2021, detail

An Evolving Practice

Across successive bodies of work, Plank has expanded a deceptively simple vocabulary of ink, language, paper, and repetition. From dense records of conversation to expansive fields and sculptural arrangements of paper, her practice continues to test how much emotion a line can carry, and how the most private experiences can become open, resonant images for others.



Jo Plank, Wish I Didn't Miss You (detail), 2025

About Jo Plank

Jo Plank is a Melbourne-based artist working primarily with ink and paper.

She studied printmaking and works on paper at the Centre for Adult Education and undertook a residency at Rigalio Studios in Umbria, Italy.

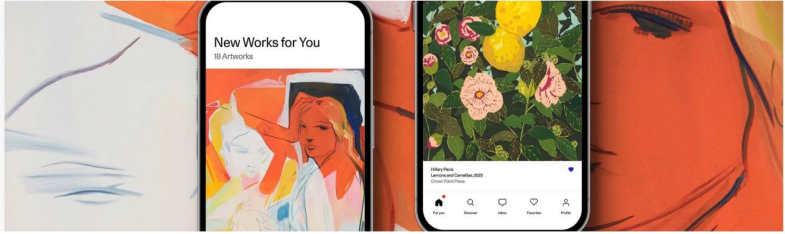
Her work has been recognised through finalist selections for the Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Waverley Art Prize, and Swan Hill Regional Art Prize.



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