

## ALIDA SAYER

### Lexicon

17 February to 30 March 2016

Perhaps you are about to open a book. (Once, you would have had to cut the pages first: ready the penknife, it's time to see the inside of the signature.) Or, arguably, you may have just shut one. You may be ready to shelve something.

At any rate, if I am your book, you are now directly across from my spine. It is in your face. Can you see it?

It is very good to run your fingers along the cut side of the page. You can feel the fuzz, fur, sometimes, when it's there: the torn side. The cut side can of course be the torn side; cuts sometimes leave tears in their tracks. It's a question of tools: a fingernail, cold metal, a reflection. *I beg you, double me.* Alida Sayer situates "Lexicon" in this place and in the time it inaugurates: instantiating an instant *in-stant? I stand; please understand, I do not understand* open and close and far. The aftermath of some undisclosed event, or preparation for it, its overture.

Marks move through the room, lit points in rhythm, as Sayer sets information free in space. To set information free is also, somehow, to pinion it, to tie it to its body. Inky whorls, prints from curled and painted edges of paper, rise and flutter, ghostly negatives in video format. These particles form walls and shapes, then disband, scattering over a screen and a pane of frosted glass. Across the room, this spectral speech of things falls into meatlike form as casts of paper sheets in bronze, aluminium, iron and plaster. These impressions might be slabs on a butcher's marble (leg, tongue, liver, heart)—but some quality of life, living, remains; I find it in the curves of these sheets (back on themselves, knees to nose, toes to tail to crown). Black ink puts a twist in what I would call destruction: it chars plaster, it makes plaster bone, its charring makes plaster bone live. Its charring touches the plaster bone on its pages, for this bone is a book. Whatever desires to be written, here, exists as both withdrawn and

*In a scroll: my body curled in on your body curled in and in and on and on and on, until we are only, and information. In our dark shell we really can't see but a bright light brings us out of hiding, and our letters are stopped in their tracks, wide-eyed, knees knocking. When we step out my body is still inside, and I find no hand in the dark.*

*Little pieces, come to me. Please run your fingers here. It's time to open. I beg you, stroke my spine.*

exposed, off, on, and in the page, and in the mouth, and in the body. This approach to acts of recording has been influenced by Sayer's research into the scrolls of Herculaneum, which remain sealed but have been read by laser, and into the ruins of Pompeii, once sealed airtight, now beginning to decay as excavation exposes them to the atmosphere. A recent residency

in South Korea has expanded the artist's longstanding interest in writing systems as ways of encoding experience, as well as in the materials used to make the written object: paper and ink.

Sometimes the metal will catch small fragments of paper, burnt. The body folds into the body. We become other things and try to show our faces.