

BLUM & POE

Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Matt Johnson

Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

November 9, 2019-January 11, 2020

Opening reception: Saturday, November 9, 5-7pm

A block is an elemental form. A unit. A bit. It is data. Either alone or part of a conglomeration, it is a piece of infinity.

Blum & Poe is pleased to present a new series of work by Los Angeles-based artist Matt Johnson. This is the artist's fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.

In an ever-expanding practice in search of the peculiar and the sublime, Johnson elevates the mundane to the exceptional. With a new body of work in carved and polychromed wood sculpture, Johnson depicts configurations of raw industrial materials from cinder block, brick, rebar, to traffic cones—permutations of information composed according to gravity, balance, and primitive instinct. A crude horse, a procession of block figures, cantilevered props, and fragile towers make reference to the concept of knowledge with small gestures—a lighter, a match book, a lightbulb, an atlas, and a monograph on Matisse. The doveled joints of glue and/or epoxy between bricks, blocks, and bars exist here not to defy gravity but to freeze balance and preserve delicate moments of experimental groupings. Like a still life, these works are organized information, like subatomic particles, atoms and elements, molecules and compounds, glued by gravity, and magnetic polarity, surfing in a sea of electrical conductivity.

There are twelve works in this show that encompass a spare minimalism. No illusions are cast, the objects are carved actors on a set, executing their performances, restricted only by their painted, wooden, physical existence. Cobbled together at just under five feet tall is *7 block 36 brick horse* (2019), supported by two stacks of bricks under a grazing head and hanging tail. This arched multi-cinderblock body, poised on brick legs and buttressed by the supporting brick stacks, seemingly makes gravitational sense. The crude Deborah Butterfield-esque horse form transcends the building materials depicted, yet the addition of the stacked buttresses return the composition to its industrial component parts layered on the ground. In *6 block standing figure with a cigarette* (2019), six cinderblocks are positioned to form a stick figure that feels both contemporary and primitive—like Koons' *Bunny* or the ancient Venus of Willendorf, it has a simplicity that endures. In *Traffic cone with a block and a lighter* (2019), we have a balancing act where a green Bic lighter is set atop a cinderblock which itself is perched precariously upon a bright orange traffic cone. This sculpture encapsulates a great part of Johnson's practice—freezing moments of gravitational equilibrium in an effort to exploit our shared understanding of weight and entropy.

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Matt Johnson (b. 1978, New York, NY) received his BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore and his MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and completed a residency at Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy. More recently, his work has been celebrated in institutional group exhibitions including *The Artist is Present*, curated by Maurizio Cattelan, Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China (2018); *99 Cents or Less*, Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, Detroit, MI (2017); *Wanderlust*, High Line Art, New York, NY (2016); *Funny*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York, NY (2012); *Lifelike*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; traveled to New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA; Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin, TX (2012); *11th Triennale Kleinplastik Fellbach*, Germany (2010); *Second Nature*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA (2009); among many others. His works are held in public collections worldwide including the Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway; Ekebergparken Sculpture Park, Oslo, Norway; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Pérez Art Museum, Miami, FL; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.